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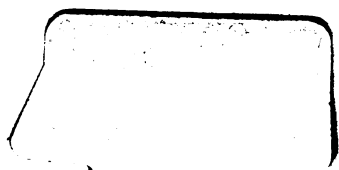


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The
BLUE
AURA

—
ELIZABETH YORK
MILLER

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"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I HAVE NOW TO INTRODUCE THE GREATEST OF
ALL BALLERINAS, MADEMOISELLE DORA."

THE BLUE AURA

BY
ELIZABETH YORK MILLER

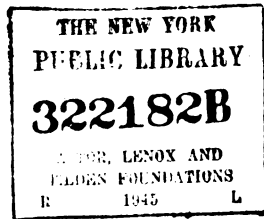
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NEW YORK
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ILLUSTRATIONS

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PAGE

<i>Bible & Tan. 19 July 1943</i>	<p>“ ‘Ladies and Gentlemen,’ announced Turco, ‘I have now to introduce the greatest of all ballerinas, Mademoiselle Dora ’ ”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Frontispiece</i></p>	
	<p>“How strong he was! Dora’s lips went white; she leaned forward, watching him tensely, her soul in her eyes. He met her glance, and for a second his arms wavered ” .</p>	56
	<p>“She saw his shoulders heave, and heard a gasping sob. Her breath came quickly. ‘Oh, Ted!’ ”</p>	129
	<p>“Smilingly Dora allowed Harland to arrange her cloak. ‘You’ll come too?’ she said. ‘We’re going to Turco’s ’ ”</p>	193
	<p>“ ‘I am so happy!’ Dumpling exclaimed ecstatically. ‘I feel that I am dancing too.’ She tried to raise herself, and held out her arms, but fell back ”</p>	240
	<p>“Now that he was dead, now that he had died for her, she owed it to him to be good forever ”</p>	344



PART I.
COLUMBINE GETS MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

THAT will do for to-day, young ladies. Ten o'clock to-morrow morning, please."

The rehearsal was dismissed. Twenty pairs of tired young feet were regvanized into action, and went scampering up the long stone corridors. Twenty undernourished and poorly clad girls poured into the dressing-rooms, and, following instinct, took immediate possession of the looking-glasses.

Out came the powder puffs and sticks of lip salve. Off came the ballet skirts and slippers, and walking attire was resumed.

Several sat down and nursed their poor stricken feet. There had been hours of sheer toe-twirling that day.

They were machines—dancing machines. Thin-chested, anemic of face, scrawny-armed, they boasted an underdevelopment that told of merciless training in the ballet.

Three intimate friends had contrived to

THE BLUE AURA

obtain the best of the dressing-rooms for their exclusive use. By an assumption of arrogance, close kin to snobbery, they led the social forces of the little band. The other girls looked up to them, envied them, hated them, longed to be one of them.

On the surface it was difficult to see what occasioned this class distinction. The three were no better off in worldly goods than the others. They were not favorites of the ballet mistress or stage manager. Indeed, one of them was anything but a favorite, and it was precisely this one who had set up the superior clique.

Her name was Dora Trelawny.

As she sat on the narrow bench, buttoning her shabby boots with the aid of a hairpin, she seemed incredibly young even for her eighteen years. But, looking closer, one might fancy that she was old for her eighteen years. She was as thin as a rail; her eyes were fiercely black; her hair was a short, dark mop, slightly frizzy. As she leaned forward it fell over her eyes, giving her a bright, animal look. Her features were rather delicate, and beautiful in profile. Full face, her mouth was too large. When she smiled, her glit-

THE BLUE AURA

tering teeth and eyes conveyed a startling impression of ferocity.

Of Miss Trelawny's clothes it were kinder not to speak in detail. She was very, very poor, and had been out of an engagement for three months. The show they were rehearsing might put up its shutters in a fortnight, for all she knew. With her friends she boldly discussed its demerits.

These two friends, chosen by her for their perfect submission to her will, followed Dora Trelawny's lead blindly.

One of them was a tall, worldly-minded young woman with large features and red hair. She "made up" quite wonderfully, but away from the footlights she was not beautiful. Her name was Ivy Love.

The other, Betty St. Clair, was the only fat girl in the company; that is to say, she was plump—a round-faced little brunette who was eternally hungry.

As she powdered her plump features she munched chocolates. Her handbag contained also an apple and a penny's worth of sweet biscuits, which she took out and laid on the dressing table.

The tall Miss Love, who had trained her-

THE BLUE AURA

self never to be hungry, eyed Betty's feast with disdain. Dora, who had trained herself to be unspeakably proud, eyed it fiercely. The sight of Betty's placid back at the mirror, with the rhythmic movement of the plump jowls, drove the younger girl to the verge of frenzy.

Her boots buttoned, she leaned against the wall and closed her eyes for a moment.

Betty laid down her powder puff and began on her apple, crunching noisily. It never occurred to her that she was the object of envy.

Dora roused herself, opened her own handbag, and surreptitiously examined its interior, hoping perhaps to find a coin that had been overlooked. The two pennies were still there, but no family had been born to them.

Two pennies!

It was last night since she had tasted food, and then only a piece of bread and sausage. This morning she had had a cup of weak tea without milk or sugar. It would be ten days before the first week's salary could be drawn—three days yet before the first performance.

Dora had a true, feminine scorn of food

THE BLUE AURA

when there was plenty of it to be had; but this was different. She was so hungry that even the smell of the rice powder which permeated the little room made her mouth water and her head grow light with longing.

The greedy Betty could do battle with life while waiting for engagements. She had no pride, and whenever she wrote to him for it, a quite wealthy uncle who owned a draper's shop in Highgate would send her five or ten shillings, as the case might be.

Ivy Love, when not on tour, lived with her parents. Her father was a clerk in a city warehouse.

Dora lived by herself in a furnished room in New Compton Street. Her landlady was an Italian woman of so suspicious a nature that room rent was demanded in advance. Dora would have died rather than ask any favors of Mrs. Petrosini, even so much as a cup of coffee.

When the girls were dressed they separated. Dora was the last to go. She remained on the pretext of doing her hair over. What really detained her was a half biscuit that Betty had dropped to the floor by accident.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora fell upon the morsel and devoured it with pitiful anguish. It racked her insides horribly. What she wanted was coffee and steak and potatoes, with plenty of bread and butter.

CHAPTER II.

DORA had "told the tale" to her friends with amazing success. They believed every word of it. She had a wonderful imagination when it came to details. Quite grandly had she pictured the ancestral seat of her family in Sussex. Trelawny Manor, she called it. She even possessed snapshots of the place to give body to the story. One of them showed a group of people on the lawn, including a child in a white frock which she declared was herself at the age of ten.

The house was a stone mansion half covered with vines. In the group was a tall man with a sweeping mustache, an elegant woman clinging to his arm. These, Dora said,—not without pride,—were her father and mother. She had broken their hearts by running away from home to go on the stage. She believed they had spent a fortune in trying to trace her, but so far without success.

Betty and Ivy thought her rather cruel to have left her parents like that; but they

THE BLUE AURA

admired her pluck, and basked proudly in the vicarious atmosphere of her aristocratic lineage.

Quite consciously Dora lived up to her rôle. She ordered them about, snubbed them when occasion required, was intoxicatingly sweet if it suited her, and, above all, honored them with her confidence and friendship. Among other things, she professed never to have been in love—and she never confessed to being hungry.

To-day, however, she confessed hunger to herself most earnestly.

It was after six when she left the theater. Her eyes had the dull expression of a famished, prowling young cat. Her overexercised legs trembled beneath the weight of her slight body.

The evening was cold. It was late in March and gusty. The streets about Shaftesbury Avenue were irritating with eddies of dust and scattered papers. Dora's clothes were thin. Her blouse had a deep V which exposed her lean throat to the wind. The pavement struck cold through her boots.

Fortunately, it was not far to her shelter in New Compton Street. The door stood

THE BLUE AURA

open, and the Italian woman was in the hall, talking to a man. He was a young man, very sleek and dandified and handsome. He had set down two suitcases marked with company tags. Evidently a music-hall artist bargaining for his week's lodgings.

He gave Dora a bright glance as she returned Mrs. Petrosini's greeting. She also stared briefly at him—long enough to be conscious of a faint thrill of interest which for the moment superseded the pangs of hunger.

As she went up the stairs she heard him ask Mrs. Petrosini who she was.

By the time she had climbed the third flight, however, he was all but forgotten in a renewed frenzy for food.

When she entered her bedroom and turned on the gas, she gave a cry of inarticulate delight at the sight of a black-bordered envelope on her washstand. She had been expecting that letter for days, and now it had come—at the eleventh hour.

The address was written in a round, carefully formed hand; the postmark was Hillborough, Sussex. Hillborough was the site of the "ancestral seat."

Dora tore open the envelope and extracted

THE BLUE AURA

the double sheet of expensive mourning note paper it contained. There were scarlet spots on her cheeks, but they blanched away to dead white when she realized finally that there was no inclosure.

So far as the stationery went, there was no reason to doubt the tall story she had told her simple-minded friends. The letterhead bore both telegraphic and telephonic addresses as well as the inscription: "The Manor, Hillborough, Sussex."

After that there came this:

Dear Dora:

Am sorry to hear you are so hard pressed, but perhaps by now things are better with you. As the family is in mourning for Major Darrell's brother, there are no house parties this spring, and consequently no tips. Mr. Burge is talking about taking a new situation. As for me, I spent my last quarter's wages on a new outfit for Easter the day before your letter arrived. I am stony. Madam is so strict that I cannot ask her for an advance without telling her what it is for. If I said you were my sister she would not believe me.

It seems to me that, with all the money spent on your education and dancing, you ought to be able to take care of yourself by

THE BLUE AURA

now. Let me know if things are better with you.

We shall be coming up to town in June, and perhaps by that time I may be able to spare you a pound or two if you need it. On no account must you write to Mr. Mayfield. It will get me into trouble if you do, as I signed off not to worry him after you were educated.

Your loving mother,

E. TRELAWNY.

P. S.—If the worst comes to the worst, why don't you go into service?

The crux of this rather grim letter lay in the postscript. The worst had come to the worst.

The girl flung herself on the bed and cried. She was an aching void, clamoring for food. After a while she got up and drank a glass of water. It almost made her sick.

She read the letter through again before she destroyed it.

Write to Mr. Mayfield, indeed! She would rather starve. She was starving. The man to whom she owed the fact of her life, and who had educated her scantily, was less than nothing to her. She hated the very thought of him.

CHAPTER III.

THE theory of acting upon the advice of the postscript exploded under the most casual examination. Going into service was not such a simple matter, as the trained lady's maid, Edith Trelawny, had every reason to know. The advice was cheap, but to follow it was beyond Dora's means.

With the ballet dancer's mincing gait and her short mop of frizzy hair, no respectable agency for domestic servants would have looked at her. Nor had she any training to fit her for household duties, nor print frocks, caps, aprons, and neat black dresses in which to execute them.

She could be and do nothing. She was nothing at all but one vast hunger at the moment. It kept her from thinking.

Out in the narrow, untidy street, children were playing noisily at their games, but with no sustained effort. Every now and then a taxicab hooted into their midst and scattered them.

THE BLUE AURA

Sometimes the cabs stopped at the little restaurant opposite, brave in its fresh paint, maddening in its florid aroma of food.

Dora hung out of her window in the Italian woman's house, and fastened her hungry gaze on the restaurant. She could see the heads of some of the diners, their jaws working like Betty St. Clair's. Every now and then a waiter came into view bearing a steaming dish.

Down below, in the twilight of the street, the front door banged. The good-looking, young music-hall artist came out on the steps and stood gazing contemplatively at the Milano. Dora Trelawny read his mind. He was wondering where to have his dinner. She heard him jingle money in his pockets. Then out of one of them he took a small implement, and commenced in leisurely fashion to attend to his nails.

The girl was in no mood to be fastidious. She did not regard him personally at all. She did not think whether she was going to like or hate him. He was simply a means to an end, and the end was food. Never before in her life had she cadged a meal; but she meant to do so now, by hook or by crook.

THE BLUE AURA

She snatched her hat, and raced down the stairs.

By the time she reached the bottom, she had the hard, bitten look of one who has been a traitor to herself—to her own best principles.

She smiled on the young man, but wolfishly, like Red Riding Hood's false grandmother when the beast croaked: "The better to eat you with, my dear!"

The youth had finished with his manicuring. He slipped the nail file back into his pocket, where it fell with a silvery sound among the loose change. He did not know that hungry Dora Trelawny had marked him down for her prey. In his own mind, it was the other way about.

He raised his soft felt hat, taking it daintily by the middle so as not to destroy the crease.

"Good evening," he said. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Frightfully cold," Dora replied.

She was out of breath from running down the stairs so fast, and settled her black velvet tam-o'-shanter with fluttering fingers.

"Mrs. Petrosini tells me you're in the profession," he went on amiably. "My name is

THE BLUE AURA

Tyson—Teddie Tyson—‘Tyro and Turco,’ you know.”

Dora didn’t know. He explained that Tyro and Turco were an acrobatic comedy team. His partner, Turco, was the clown. Turco was his real name. He was a foreigner—something like a monkey in facial expression and agility.

Dora laughed shrilly, but her attention was on the restaurant across the way.

And now he read *her* mind.

“Do you get your meals over there?” he asked. “Mrs. Petrosini says it’s a good place. I *was* going to Chapin’s, but——”

“Oh, you’ll like the Milano!” Dora exclaimed.

She made a business of buttoning her shabby glove.

“Come on, then—unless you’ve another engagement,” said Mr. Tyson.

Dora was not sure whether this was an invitation or not. She clinched it with a show of reluctance. In another moment he made it plain that he was inviting her to dine with him.

CHAPTER IV.

BY the time her appetite was satiated, Dora scorned herself thoroughly. She believed that her weakness had been indefensible.

It was nothing to accept a meal from a man when one did not actually require it as charity—quite something else when it became an obligation.

She, Dora Trelawny, was under an obligation to this stranger. What was worse, he had come gradually to understand that she was, and took a stealthy appreciation of the fact.

She was nervous of him. He was not to be overawed, like Betty and Ivy, with tales of the ancestral seat. He laughed with contempt at her little airs of superiority.

But the girl herself inflamed a heavy interest in him. He liked the spectacular aspect of her: her mop of short, outstanding hair; her wide, red-lipped smile; her fierce dark

THE BLUE AURA

eyes. And her great need was his opportunity.

They became intimate in their conversation, and gossiped about themselves. She learned that his father had been a circus clown and his mother a bareback rider. They had both met violent deaths. He had brothers here and there, and one sister who had married out of the profession. He said he was twenty-four, and had been tumbling since he was six. He and Turco drew a joint salary of twenty pounds a week, but their traveling expenses were heavy. They were booked now for six weeks in and about London, and so might hope to save some money. It was now nearly a year since they had been in London.

It was Turco who had recommended Mrs. Petrosini's establishment. Teddie Tyson did not think much of it; still he would stay on, now that he had arrived.

Dora wished with all her heart and soul that he wouldn't. To-morrow night she would be ravenous again. Already he was trying to make an engagement with her for to-morrow night.

They went back to Mrs. Petrosini's, and

THE BLUE AURA

she made him leave her on the stairs, but not before he had managed to kiss her.

He went out again. She heard the door slam as she hurried up, his soft kiss still burning her lips. She had been kissed before in her young life, but never without half willing it, never in fulfillment of an obligation.

Her cheeks burned as she sat on the edge of her bed and reflected that she had been fed, and had paid for her feeding with a kiss. It was horrible.

Out of the dim past a certain heritage of delicacy had come down to her.

It made her dream, and sometimes gave her wonderful visions of herself as she ought to be. At times the story of the ancestral seat, and the tragic, well-born parents she was supposed to have deserted, was more real to her than the actual facts of her existence; she longed for so many things she did not and never could possess.

It was night; and she undressed and fell asleep finally, her appetite satisfied, yet the torment of to-morrow holding its menace over her like a sword.

What would to-morrow bring? More food—and more kisses?

THE BLUE AURA

She did not know. There was a horrible uncertainty about it all.

When the morning dawned she was hungry again. Oh, that hunger! It was like a rat gnawing at her breastbone.

There was still a little tea left, but it was difficult to bring water to boil over the insufficient gas jet. The cunning Mrs. Petrosini had tampered so successfully with the burner that only the split two thirds of a flame could flicker up.

However, Dora made her tea, such as it was, and bought a halfpenny bun on her way to rehearsal. This she ate in the street. She was almost satisfied—fairly strong for the day's work.

Mr. Tyson had been nowhere in evidence when she left the house. As the day and her hunger developed, she began to fear that perhaps his interest in her had flagged. Perhaps he would not be waiting on the steps to-night to take her to the Milano. So she was torn between two fears—the fear that he would or would not be there. All day she thought of him in the mingled anguish with which one with an aching tooth contemplates the dentist.

THE BLUE AURA

At one o'clock the rehearsal halted abruptly. There would be an interval of two hours to allow important people opportunity for their lunch.

The three friends, linking arms, wandered out into the streets. They were all rather silent at first. Their purses were empty. By a slip of the post, Betty's money order had not come. She, having no pride, but great confidence in the future, tried to borrow from Dora and Ivy. Ivy, consistently above food, had only her return fare. Dora gave Betty a penny, which the greedy girl invested in chocolate from a curb vender. She offered her friends a share of it, but they refused. Her hunger was like a baby's; it could not be stifled. For the sake of peace, at all costs, it must be satisfied. Yet that was a difficult thing to do.

As they wandered about, looking into shop windows at cheap finery they had little hope of buying, quite gayly their talk turned upon food—upon meals that were past, of restaurants they had known, of Christmas spreads on the stage at pantomime time.

Dora, however, said nothing about last night at the Milano. She felt guilty before

THE BLUE AURA

her friends. They were good girls. Neither of them, she felt sure, had ever bought a meal at the price of a kiss.

Then they talked about love and marriage. Ivy thought the combination must be highly agreeable if one found the right man, and he had plenty of money. Betty longed for it. Dora scoffed at it. She, who had never been in love, discounted the whole idea. It was one half love and the other half marriage that made all the trouble in this world, she said. She spoke with great bitterness, and neither of them knew that she was thinking of her vain, flighty mother and a mysterious man by the name of Mayfield. They admired her for her hardness. There was something so brilliant, so abandoned, in her point of view, that it gave them a pleasurable shock.

As they neared the theater again the conversation turned back to food. Betty was wailing. She knew she was going to faint before the afternoon was over.

"Little pig!" exclaimed Ivy impatiently.

The two nearly quarreled over that. Dora held aloof. She knew what her own temptation had been; how she had fallen—would fall

THE BLUE AURA

again, perhaps. She hid the fact like the grim secret it was, but it made her more tender toward Betty.

There was the grinding anxiety not only of the future but of the present. The future did not matter so much. They were young enough to sense its charm.

During the afternoon's torture a girl did faint, but it wasn't Betty St. Clair. It was a frail, consumptive-looking creature who was rather shunned by the others for something dubious in her relations to society. She had a fur coat and a silver-gilt handbag, and taxied to rehearsals. The wardrobe woman was sent out to fetch brandy and milk, and the others stood about watching her restoration to consciousness with greedy eyes and stolid faces.

Dora wished that she could faint. She hated the consumptive-looking girl, and determined to ostracize her more than ever. She could never forgive that girl for fainting.

But, worst of all, she could not forgive her own guilty secret. It filled her with a grievance against the whole world, with the exception of Betty, who was honest about her hunger. Betty got Dora's last halfpenny.

THE BLUE AURA

It would buy a small bun, and Dora, herself, was growing reckless. She felt as if she did not care any more. The girl who did not need brandy and milk, but who had obtained them, nevertheless, through fainting, had put the cap on Dora Trelawny's impatience.

The secret weighed upon her as she hurried home that evening. Freakishly, the weather had changed. It was warm and windless. In the evening papers it was proclaimed that spring had come. There were prim-roses, daffodils, and violets on sale in the streets.

When she reached the house Mrs. Petrosini came out of a room on the ground floor and eyed her with shrewish, heavy-lidded interest. An adorable child was clinging to her skirts—a soiled little child, but beautiful as the Italian angels.

“Mr. Tyson, he asks after you,” said Mrs. Petrosini. “There is something upstairs for you. When can I have the rent for next week?”

Dora winced. The association of ideas was too painful.

“To-morrow—or the day after,” she said in reply to the last question.

THE BLUE AURA

Mrs. Petrosini shrugged her clumsy shoulders. The child sucked its finger and regarded Dora out of unfathomable brown eyes.

"I should like it to-day," said Mrs. Petrosini, with wistful firmness.

But Dora was just as firm—disappointingly so.

"I haven't got it to-day," she snapped. "You can't give what you haven't got."

"You must pay what you owe," said Mrs. Petrosini gloomily.

"When I owe it, I will," Dora retorted, starting up the stairs with a lofty air of indifference.

"Terms in advance!" the landlady shrieked after her.

"Your terms—not mine," Dora flung back.

A door on the first landing stood at the crack. As she passed it Dora was aware that it moved softly. She trembled with outraged pride. That was Tyson's door, she felt sure. He would have the best room in the house, undoubtedly—and he had heard every word of what had been said.

He would understand that she could not pay her rent any more than she could buy

THE BLUE AURA

her own meals. In his common way, he would see straight through her poor subterfuges. He had not even believed the story of Trelawny Manor, and had shamed her assumption of grandeur by the simple tale of his own humble beginnings. It did not make her like him any better, but it made her fear him. She felt the elementary power in truth that no sham, however clever, could imitate.

And now the ravenous hunger was on her again. A breath of faintness swept over her as she mounted the last flight of stairs. She went up with heavy slowness. That faintness would have been useful in the theater, but now it served no purpose. It was a pity she had to be so proud when other people were about.

She opened the door, vaguely curious about what she should find there. Mrs. Petrosini had said there was something.

A message from *him*?

It had taken the form of a bunch of violets, which the landlady had thoughtfully put into water. And romantically thrust in among the tops of the blossoms was a folded slip of paper on which was written the hope

THE BLUE AURA

that he would see her to-night. No doubt Mrs. Petrosini had read that hope and translated it into one of her own.

With a very serious face, Dora Trelawny took stock of her wardrobe.

One by one she reviewed the limp, gay garments that had seen better days—some of them on other backs than hers. Her selection fell at last upon a sack-like gown of cheap, worn black velvet which looked well enough by night, and, since it was fairly heavy, could be donned without a coat. With it she wore her black tam-o'-shanter and a string of scarlet beads. Her gloves were not decent enough, so she left her hands bare.

As she dressed she was acutely conscious of her hunger. It was like a consuming fire. The fire raged, and she hated herself fiercely, thinking of Betty, too—wondering if Betty's money order had come, or if the complaisant uncle had failed in his duty, as comfortable, well-fed people do sometimes fail.

Dora was thoroughly wretched, and being wretched she smiled her wicked smile at the image of herself in the glass. It seemed to her that she was growing ugly—that the grin-

THE BLUE AURA

ning skull was inadequately masked by its thin layer of skin and muscle.

Oh, hideous—to fade away to bones! All through lack of food—through lack of what was every woman's right.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was a surprise in store for Dora—almost an agreeable one. She was not to dine alone with the autocrat of food. When she came down, uncertain as to where and how she was to meet Tyson, since no rendezvous had been suggested, he emerged from his room—it was his door that had been on the crack—and following him was a short, powerfully built man, with long arms like an ape's, and a curious shaven head in which were set a pair of cunning, monkey-like eyes.

After the description she had received, it scarcely needed an introduction to tell Dora that this was Turco, the clown partner.

Tyson frankly apologized for the intrusion of Turco, who, it seemed, had come back to town with a great idea for a new development in their act. They had been practicing it all the afternoon, and both of them were hot and tired.

Turco was slovenly. His wilted collar, much

THE BLUE AURA

too big for him, his baggy clothes, his red necktie, gave him an uncouth, repulsive appearance. There was a dark haze on his shaven chin and cheek bones, a wrinkling of the brows, and a curiously pathetic expression in the oddly set eyes.

As the three started down the street together people turned and laughed. Dora was furious.

She walked ahead with Tyson, who was as spruce and neat as ever, and Turco trailed behind them like a dog. So far, nothing more than a smile had passed his countenance.

They were not dining at the Milano this evening. Tyson demanded the wider atmosphere of Chapin's. There was someone he hoped to meet there—a man with whom he had some mysterious business. Dora felt that he was merely taking her along because he knew she had to be fed. It added to her humiliation, and she was sulky when he asked her why she had not worn his violets.

Was she his slave merely for food? She knew she was, but she walked haughtily in her chains, in spite of faintness. Behind them trotted Turco, like the slave's tame ape.

THE BLUE AURA

At Chapin's they had some difficulty in securing a place. They went into the café, a welter of plush couches and chocolate-colored, marble-topped tables.

When they were finally seated Dora had her first good look at Turco, spoke to him directly for the first time. He seemed old for an acrobat. She fancied that the rough, short hair on his cropped head was actually grizzled. Yet the handsome boy partner had, with his perfect honesty, made it plain to her that Turco's was the more difficult and dangerous of the work they did together. She sensed an affection between the two men—a quiet, established thing fraught with deep loyalty.

For some reason, it angered her. She was a woman, and could part them—could break up that money-getting coöperation of theirs that rested fundamentally upon their good will toward each other.

So she spoke to Turco with the idea of drawing him out and making him look like a fool.

He was glad of her notice. He leaped to it with a charm and delicacy that gave her a shock. Tyson had said that he was a for-

THE BLUE AURA

eigner; but his speech betrayed no sign of it. His voice was soft and gentle, a cultivated voice, at great variance with his uncouth appearance.

"I suppose, in your work, you meet a great many interesting people, Mr. Turco," said Dora.

"All people are interesting to me," the odd little man replied, with a wistful smile.

"And I am sure you are interesting yourself," Dora said, smiling slyly at Tyson.

Turco shook his head; he was not so certain about that.

"But you make people laugh," she persisted, determined to be cruel.

"He makes 'em roar," Teddie Tyson put in, thinking she referred to his partner's public life.

Turco, however, knew better. He knew that this handsome, famished girl was laughing at him when he did not in the least mean to be funny. She was laughing at him as a man. There was sorrow in his monkey's eyes as he tried to smile bravely. He did not hate her, but quite unconsciously he took a horrible revenge on her; it was he who paid for her dinner that night.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora's flesh prickled and a cold-hot wave passed over her ill-nourished body when she saw him appropriate the bill and take a handful of gold from his pocket, sorting out a coin with his thin, hairy fingers.

Her eyes met Tyson's, seeking in him a refuge. The young acrobat did not know what she meant, but her glance kindled a flame in him. He leaned toward her, so that their shoulders touched.

Then he got up abruptly. Across the crowded room he had caught sight of the man he wanted to see. He left Dora alone there with the creature Turco.

The girl did not know what to do. The atmosphere stifled her. She wished she could get up and leave the café. But she had had her meal, and now she was under an obligation for it to this other man, this most repulsive man. She did not know whether Tyson was coming back or not. What should she say to Turco—how rid herself of him?

He, on his part, also seemed embarrassed. He sat with his oddly wrinkled brow and deep-set little eyes blinking at her as though she, not he, were the curious one, the novelty

THE BLUE AURA

in human flesh. She felt that no man had ever looked at her in that way before.

What was he thinking? If he would only remove his hateful scrutiny!

Suddenly he spoke, and what he said was so unexpected that she experienced a great shock.

"Excuse me, little miss, but I was looking at your aura."

In an indefinite way Dora had heard of auræ. They were nebulous somethings of different colors that formed an atmosphere about one. Blue was a good color. It meant love and fortune. The girls who visited soothsayers had mentioned these things to her.

With the shock came also a sense of relief, because she had discovered what Turco was thinking of when he sat gazing at her so strangely. She flashed her brilliant, fierce smile on him. A lock of hair fell forward over her eyes, giving her the daring gamin expression that was her greatest charm.

"My aura? Is it blue?"

He shook his head.

Not blue. A disappointment, rather. She was wistful, interested all at once.

THE BLUE AURA

"Can you tell fortunes?" she asked abruptly.

Again he shook his head.

"No—I can only see the future."

"But that *is* telling fortunes! What do you see in my future?"

His reply filled her with foreboding:

"Myself—and two others."

She laughed awkwardly.

"You! *I don't think!*" There was no mistaking the contemptuous sneer, but Turco sat firm under it.

"Myself—and two others. But myself first, little miss," he said gently.

"Go on!" Dora jeered. "I'm more interested in the others. Who are they?"

He inclined his head toward the side of the café where Tyson had gone. "One of them is that boy, and the other——"

"Yes, yes! I am more interested still in the other."

"The other is a gentleman, little miss," he asserted solemnly.

"And which of you am I going to love?" Dora asked in a tone of raillery. But her voice broke. She was nervous.

As she became used to the curious creature

THE BLUE AURA

in his baggy clothes and flaming red necktie he took on more human qualities. It was his voice that did it—the sweet, melancholy voice with no uneducated, rough notes in it.

“You will love all three of us,” he said, “but in different ways, perhaps.”

Dora laughed uneasily.

“An exciting future for me!”

“No—for us,” Turco said.

“You annoy me!” she exclaimed. “What right have you to—oh, well, never mind!” she broke off suddenly, curiosity getting the better of her.

The situation was all the more uncanny because since yesterday evening, when she had first met Tyson,—passed him in the corridor,—she had felt that *he*, at least, would play some part in her life. And she had dreaded the part he might play.

Now was come the strange partner seeing an aura about her. For some unknown reason, she had more faith in him than in those who told fortunes for shillings and half-crowns.

“Go on—tell me some more,” she commanded, leaning her elbows on the table and facing him confidentially.

THE BLUE AURA

"But I don't want to annoy you, little miss."

"You don't, really. I didn't mean anything. What color is my aura, if it isn't blue?" She still hoped it would prove to be blue.

"It is brilliant—like a rainbow, little miss."

"Oh! Is that good? There ought to be a pot of money at the end of it. Is there?"

"What do you want with a pot of money?" he asked rather fiercely.

In her silence he read her answer. Suddenly he dived into his pocket, and, taking out a handful of the glittering golden coins, slapped them on to the table.

"If you need money, there it is. Take what you want. Why do you hesitate?"

Tyson was coming back. Dora saw him get up and say his farewells.

She did need money. It would be impossible to live through the next ten days without it.

All at once she ceased to feel afraid of Turco. It was his handsome, boyish partner she feared.

"Yes, yes; take what you want," Turco

THE BLUE AURA

urged, as though he read her tortured mind. Her hand went out and pocketed a sovereign. He swept up the rest, and by the time Tyson had crossed the room the table between them was clear.

CHAPTER VI.

TURCO trotted off by himself into the night. He soon vanished in the press about Piccadilly. One moment he was there and the next he was gone. Dora felt a sense of loss. She looked about vainly, yielding unwillingly to Tyson's clasp of her arm.

"Never mind about him," the handsome boy said, with a consoling laugh. "You have me."

"He's a queer man. I didn't like him at first," Dora replied wistfully.

"You can't *dislike* Turco."

"He said I would love him," she remarked.

Tyson laughed and squeezed her arm.

"Not likely, when I'm about. I'm simply mad about you. You're the first girl in a year that I've troubled to look at."

With the sovereign in her pocket, Dora listened to this with an astonishing serenity. She felt quite sure of herself.

"Do you think I believe that?" she challenged.

THE BLUE AURA

"I don't care whether you believe it or not—it's the truth," he replied. She had an uncomfortable idea that he was always telling the truth—too blatant and blunt, even in his florid handsomeness, for the subtleties she fancied she approved.

"You say you're mad about me. Does that mean you're in love with me?" she asked.

"Love? I don't know. I've never been in love."

"Neither have I," she asserted.

Each was surprised at the other, and a trifle hurt. There was a hint of discourtesy in the mutual attitude.

"If I ever fell in love," Tyson said slowly, "there wouldn't be any limit to it. That's why I'm careful. If you love a girl she can ruin your life. I've seen it happen over and over again."

There and then Dora cunningly decided that he should love her. With Turco's piece of gold in her pocket she felt quite free. She felt different even toward Tyson. She neither hated nor feared him, and in prophesying her future Turco had invested his friend with romantic possibilities. Was not Tyson one

THE BLUE AURA

of those men she would love? What was ordained must be.

In the darkness of the street he clasped her bare fingers.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"I must go home," she answered firmly.

"I'm tired. It's been a rotten day—except this evening."

"Oh, yes," he said hastily. "I heard what you and Mrs. Petrosini were talking about. You're on the rocks, aren't you?"

Dora tossed her head. She was sure Turco would say nothing about the sovereign.

"Not in the least—I don't know what you mean."

"But——"

"You heard me say it wasn't convenient to pay her to-day. I shall pay her to-morrow. It's no affair of yours."

Under the rebuke he was silent—thoughtful, rather; but he was not accustomed to deep thinking. Plainly, she had no need of him. She was not in love with him, nor was she mad about him, as he confessed to himself he was about her. He wondered if this were the beginning of love in his own case. Turco had told him it would have to come some time,

THE BLUE AURA

and that he would suffer. Turco had read his future also.

In the practical brain of the handsome acrobat there dawned the wish that Dora Tre-lawny, nimble-footed and attractive, if you like, might be incorporated into the company of Tyro and Turco. They need pay her only a couple of pounds a week, if she would come. Only Turco might object. The last time there had been a woman with the act Turco had behaved in a most ungallant and ungenerous fashion, and had finally flung her out altogether. Teddie Tyson knew on which side his bread was buttered. Without Turco he would be nothing, while the clown could get a dozen satisfactory new partners for the asking.

So in silence he walked beside Dora, holding her fingers, marveling at the charm in which she was suddenly invested for him—something utterly beyond his calculations until almost this moment.

It was dark at the foot of the stairs when they let themselves in.

"Good night," said the now thoroughly independent Dora.

He clung to her hand.

THE BLUE AURA

"Aren't you going to kiss me?"

"What for?" she asked. She was under no obligation to him for this evening.

"Because I want you to," he pleaded.

She thrilled, and bent toward him, only half believing in her own stinging emotions.

Their lips met. It was a kiss that drowned her consciousness. It was love, at last!

His arms closed about her, and he kissed her again and again. It was love with him, too.

The prophecy of the wrinkle-browed clown was coming to early fulfillment.

"I love you—love you—love you!" Tyson cried between kisses.

Dora's cheek fluttered against his with the soft terror of a bird's wing. He held her captive. Then he let her go.

With a trilling laugh, she escaped up the stairs. She was strangely happy and excited.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day was rather wondrous. Dora had a good breakfast; she paid Mrs. Petrosini, and skipped to rehearsal prepared to play Lady Bountiful to her friends. Betty's postal order had come, however, so there were two of them in funds. Dora did not explain how she had received her own riches, and the others did not ask her. Money was always a burning but sometimes a delicate question with them. They thought she had pawned something.

The best thing that happened that day was a dismissal of the ballet at noon. They would not be called again until Monday morning. Monday they were to open.

The three girls lunched at a cheap restaurant in Soho. They did not mind, however. Even Ivy laid aside her contempt for food. She was being treated. The tall, red-haired girl's family provided her with all she actually required at home, but they could not give her pocket money.

THE BLUE AURA

They were a gay trio that afternoon. Dora was in unusual spirits, and the others followed her lead as a matter of course.

When she broke the important news to them they were electrified.

Dora thought she was falling in love!

They gaped toward her, incredulous, curious. They hurled a dozen questions at her in a breath.

It was Dora's moment of great temptation. How she longed to invest her lover with noble qualities, to make the adventure worthy of the sort of romance she felt was her due! But Betty and Ivy would not rest until they had seen him, and he, of course, could be relied upon to tell the truth about himself. Not much use to say that he was a titled gentleman whose high-powered motor car had nearly run her down in the street, and to date the acquaintance from that fictitious incident. Teddie Tyson was proud of himself as he was. He had achieved much from humble beginnings.

So she told most of the truth, giving him as much glamour as she thought he could stand, and dwelling heavily on the fact that he was extremely handsome.

THE BLUE AURA

Marriage?

Dora tossed her head. She did not know whether she loved him enough to marry him.

"Then," said Betty, "it isn't love at all."

Dora was slightly crestfallen. Perhaps it wasn't love; how could she tell?

"Has he asked you to marry him?" questioned big-featured Ivy.

Dora hesitated. It would be humiliating to say that he had not. To hesitate, in this instance, was to be thoroughly well understood.

"I'd be careful if I was you," advised Ivy, who was very worldly-minded.

"I should think I can take care of myself," Dora said resentfully.

"I should think Dora *could* take care of herself," chirped plump little Betty.

It was a curious feature of their friendship that whenever one of the two ventured to criticize Dora she was immediately set upon by the other, who rallied to Dora's defense. Ivy and Betty were a bit jealous of each other. It was Dora who ruled them both.

"What do you know about it?" said Ivy to Betty, with deep scorn. "You're only a child. Of course Dora can take care of her-

THE BLUE AURA

self. We all of us can, up to a certain point."

"What certain point?" asked Dora. She was thirsty for knowledge, and Ivy was a fountainhead.

"When love steps in," Ivy explained. Her big features had a wistful expression. "Then one does things sometimes—that are foolish."

"And indiscreet," agreed Betty, trying to imitate Ivy's air of wisdom and so curry favor with the idol.

It was Ivy's turn, now, to support Dora.

"Dora is the last person in the world to be indiscreet," she snapped.

Betty cut herself half of the attenuated piece of cheese offered for their consumption. She was a perfectly unconscious glutton.

"Well, you said she was foolish," she retorted.

"I didn't."

"You did."

"Dora, did I?"

"You said that when people were in love they were sometimes foolish," Dora put in.

She loved this discussion of herself. She enjoyed the rivalry of her friends, pitted against each other to win her regard. It

THE BLUE AURA

gave her a sense of power. It was the same feeling which made her wish to bring disruption between the acrobats, and to determine that Tyson should love her when he told her that he feared love, that love could wreck a man's life, and that was why he had always avoided it.

Betty and Ivy refused actually to quarrel, however. To do that would mean one of them being cut off from Dora's society, and there was never any telling with whom Dora would take sides. She was too capricious to trust. The deepest loyalty was not sure of winning her heart.

They were both wishing that she would extend some sort of invitation to them. They wanted to see this marvelous young man who had captured her fancy. In a way, they resented him. He threatened to absorb too much of Dora's time and attention. Already her mind was in a hazy, wavering state, distracted from everyday affairs.

She had told them very little about Turco, and nothing at all about the aura business. They would have fastened on her like leeches if there were any chance of getting their fortunes told.

THE BLUE AURA

After lunch she resolutely bade them good-by. It was a disappointment to them, for they found no charm in each other's society. Besides, they had wanted so much to probe the depths of Dora's love affair.

Dora, however, wished to be alone. She knew she would see Tyson again that evening, and she was impelled to make herself more attractive.

She went into a cheap shop off Shaftesbury Avenue and bought a pair of white gloves and a scarlet ribbon for her hair. In another shop where they sold misfit and second-hand theatrical shoes she discovered a pair of black slippers with red heels for four and sixpence.

By this time the sovereign had shrunk considerably. She was appalled to find that there was less than four shillings left. But her room was paid for, and food was never important except when she was hungry.

With these inspiring purchases she returned to her lodgings. She walked springily, in her mind a dozen things to do. There was, to begin with, a little laundry work, handkerchiefs, and a lawn collar. Then she must overhaul the black velvet, brush and steam it, and put on the two buttons it had lost.

THE BLUE AURA

She wanted to look beautiful for the evening. She must also hunt out two silk stockings in which there still remained the possibility of further darning.

Up the stairs she went singing, the spring in her veins, joy in her heart. Mrs. Petrosini met and beamed on her.

"It is a beautiful day, miss."

"Indeed, yes," responded Dora.

"Mr. Tyson, he has a gentleman to tea. He would like you to come at five o'clock, if you are in. I go to buy a cake and some fresh rolls."

Apparently she felt the mission to be one of importance.

"He gives me two shillings," she added.

"How nice!" exclaimed Dora.

She glanced at Tyson's closed door. She longed to knock, to speak to him and tell him she would come to his tea-party; but, after all, it was enough that he had invited her. It was getting on for half-past three; she would have to hurry.

Mrs. Petrosini made no objection to hot water being fetched from her kitchen. The Italian woman was in a singularly agreeable mind and brought it up herself.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora moved about briskly at her domestic duties, humming under her breath, occasionally twirling on her toes.

What had brought joy into her life so suddenly?

Was it indeed the love she had confessed to her friends, or was it something less romantic—Turco's gift of the golden sovereign?

It was pitifully true that because of the sovereign Mrs. Petrosini had become amiable; that she had lunched and had helped to feed Ivy; there were the white gloves, a scarlet ribbon, and shoes with red heels.

All these things gave her joy. But it was not of Turco that she thought, or of whom she had talked with her friends. It was not Turco who had kissed her.

Presently she was conscious of a puzzling sound or a succession of sounds from the room below. She stopped her singing and toe-twirling, and went softly, pausing to listen every now and again. Dull thuds like blows; the murmur of voices; strange sounds as of bounding and leaping. The reverberations were almost stealthy. They did not shake the house; they merely gave it a sense of life and activity.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora had no watch. She took her time from the clock in the Milano, which she could see by bending down to the window sill. It was now five, and she must go to the tea-party. She gathered up her work-basket with the silk stockings. A wistful desire to show herself in a domestic rôle seized her, and she had already filled in the more glaring of the rents.

Still the mysterious sounds kept up. As she went down the stairs, wondering and a little nervous, she suddenly realized their meaning.

Tyson came to the door in his shirt sleeves and black satin knee breeches. He was perspiring, and wore no collar. His hair fell negligently over his forehead. His other guest, of course, was Turco, and they had been practicing.

Turco had donned no professional costume beyond a pair of gymnast's shoes. He wore the baggy clothes of yesterday, minus his coat, the same red tie, and apparently the same wilted collar.

It was a large room,—the best in Mrs. Petrosini's house,—and the furniture, with the exception of a heavy table, had been

THE BLUE AURA

pushed back against the walls, leaving a cleared space of faded Brussels carpet. The table was plainly a piece of professional furniture belonging to the acrobatic team—as were also a short graduated ladder and a couple of stout chairs.

Dora came in with her charming smile somewhat tempered of its fierceness, the work-basket in the crook of her arm. She felt small and helpless and soft in the presence of this muscular young man who had been demonstrating his strength and agility. For her sake he must go on.

“Sit over there,” he said, indicating a safe corner. “We’ll go over this trick again before the old woman brings up the tea.”

Turco came forward rather shyly from his position in the background. His young partner seemed rather out of breath, but he was cool and unhurried.

Dora smiled at him. It seemed queer to her that he was the author of her present state of bliss. There was a secret bond between them.

Holding the ladder, he screwed up his eyes and blinked—just like a monkey. She could

THE BLUE AURA

fancy what a mirth-provoking object he would be with very little make-up.

She laughed shrilly, but he took no notice of her.

Up the ladder he scampered, balancing it by himself, and perched on the top round, while it swayed perilously. Down, down it would go on one side, while he sat in seeming unconsciousness of his danger, and lit a cigarette with infinite pains and many facial contortions.

Dora laughed again, then bit her lip to control a squeak of alarm. Surely this time he would fall.

Tyson swung into the scene at the critical moment. As Turco would have come tumbling down his partner caught the ladder and raised it aloft with one arm, Turco still at the top, absorbed in his cigarette.

It was a mighty feat of strength. Tyson held the ladder high over his head, while Turco began to gambol madly on all fours from end to end, as if suddenly awakened to a sense of danger, now that he was more or less safe.

The muscles on the younger man's neck

THE BLUE AURA

stood out like cords; his bare arm trembled under the fluctuating weight.

How strong he was!

Dora's lips went white; she leaned forward, watching him tensely, her soul in her eyes.

He met her glance, and for a second his massive arm wavered; but it stiffened instantly again at a guttural exclamation from his suspended partner.

Then there was a light thud as Turco leaped to the floor, and it was over.

The blood rushed back into Dora's lips, coloring them profusely. She was excited and curiously satisfied. She had seen the slip, the instant of wavering hesitation when her eyes met those of the young man. She had seen that he was uncertain of himself, and knew that it was she who had made him uncertain.

The knowledge filled her with a sense of gratified power. Guiltily she bent over her mending basket as Turco scolded his partner. Turco was plainly the master. That surprised her. She was surprised to see Tyson take it meekly, even to the point of apologizing. She was afraid to look at Turco—afraid he would scold her, too. Apparently, how-



"HOW STRONG HE WAS! DORA'S LIPS WENT WHITE; SHE LEANED FORWARD, WATCHING HIM TENSELY, HER SOUL IN HER EYES. HE MET HER GLANCE, AND FOR A SECOND HIS ARM WAVERED."

THE BLUE AURA

ever, he did not know what had caused the slip.

Mrs. Petrosini, entering with the tea, saved the situation.

' Instantly they became a merry party. Dora took the head of the table and poured. The two men sat on either side. They ate voraciously—Turco fairly stuffed himself.

Their work was over for the day.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT began to grow dusky. The disordered room, with the furniture pushed haphazard against the walls and some of it pulled out again, had an air of melancholy difficult to define. The tea was laid on the tumbling-table. It was a stout table of white-painted wood, straight and solid like the tiny models in a child's toy circus. So were the ladder and the chairs. And Tyro and Turco, too, were not unlike the jointed dolls in a toy circus.

After a while they lit the gas, and Dora was encouraged to go up and put on a ballet skirt and slippers. Turco had an idea that she possessed acrobatic talents. When she came down again, shy and mincing in the old black skirt and worn practice slippers, she too was like a doll in a toy circus.

The two men forgot that their work was over for the day and disregarded the heavy tea they had consumed.

Dora was a featherweight in her lover's

THE BLUE AURA

arms. He tossed and balanced her lightly. She had a marvelous sense of balance, but she was half afraid when he held her.

They tried to make her jump from his shoulders to Turco's—an impossible feat for her. Her legs trembled as she bent to obey. She lost her head, and would have come down heavily but for Turco, who was powerful for his size, and caught her broadside on, as it were.

Her body seemed to spring as he caught her. She had the sensation of landing in a safety net. Turco's art was delicate and finished. She realized that he was indeed the master.

When it came to dancing, she could demonstrate an art of her own. Turco put her through her paces, watching her singularly virile movements with his critical monkey's eyes, as if he saw something through and beyond her that in time she would become.

She did not know that Tyson had hinted to his partner about incorporating her into their act. She did not know that through the gate of fatalism she had walked into these men's lives, and that both of them realized it.

She was merely supremely happy; for she

THE BLUE AURA

loved to dance, to give free play to her instinct for motion, to liberate a certain wildness of the blood that could be tamed in no other way.

There in the pale, insufficient gaslight, their elongated shadows moving grotesquely in marvelous leaps and bounds, the three wore themselves out. Dora was pale with fatigue, but she was wound up, like an over-excited child.

Breathless, Tyson caught her in his arms at the climax of collapse, and held her close while he pressed his lips to hers in an ecstatic kiss. She struggled, ashamed to be embraced before Turco.

The uncouth little man had swung himself upon the table, and sat there with his legs folded under him, watching them quietly.

"Turco doesn't mind. He knows I love you," Tyson said, his handsome face irradiated with a tender smile.

Turco stirred uneasily, but he continued to watch them.

Dora drew herself away and shook out her mane of short, frizzy hair as a means of putting it in order.

THE BLUE AURA

"You shouldn't have kissed me," she pouted.

"But I kissed you last night, and the night before," said the unpleasantly truthful young man, in a tone of hurt astonishment.

"How dare you! How dare you talk about it!" shrieked Dora, pale-faced and furious.

What would Turco think of her—he who had given her gold for her independence?

But Turco, like a queer little idol, sat immovable on the table, letting them fight it out, as if it were no concern of his.

"Don't you love me?" Tyson asked, with a teasing inflection.

"No; I hate you," she cried.

"That's not true. Why can't you ever speak the truth? You're a coward," Tyson continued, with the bantering smile that drove her wild.

She moved toward the door with simulated dignity, her short skirts bobbing like the tailfeathers of an angry hen, her toes unconsciously pointed and mincing.

Tyson was there before her.

"You're not angry, really? We've had such a jolly time. All because I kissed you!

THE BLUE AURA

But I love you and you love me. Does it matter if Turco knows?"

Turco continued to sit as before; only he turned his head to follow their movements, as if watching them had an uncontrollable fascination for him.

Dora stamped her foot. She felt she was being made to look silly.

"Let me go—don't talk to me! I *am* angry—I'm furious!"

Her face was black and murky. All her life she had been subject to fits of temper, but it was only occasionally now that she gave way to them. Strange to relate, she was really enjoying herself.

Tyson stepped aside as if he meant to let her have her way, which was not in the least what she wanted. He was perplexed and wistful, but the tenderness was in his eyes.

Then suddenly Turco, the squatting idol, spoke. His voice arrested Dora's flight, and she glanced toward him, startled. It seemed as if he were speaking to himself.

"*His is beautiful—all rosy and quivering with pure love! But hers! How hideous it is! It licks the whole room with its flaming tongues of hate—black and scarlet, with such*

— THE BLUE AURA

livid vortices! God help her, but she is hideous! God pity her because she is so hideous!"

Forgetting the scene she was in the midst of enjoying, Dora turned to Tyson for an explanation of this extraordinary speech. Turco seemed miles away. He filled her with superstitious dread.

"What does he mean?" she whispered fearfully.

Tyson flushed and looked uncomfortable.

"Don't mind him. He gets like that sometimes. He imagines he's looking at our astral bodies."

Dora shuddered. Turco was uncanny. Did he have X-ray eyes? What was her astral body? Something to do with an aura?

She did not object when Tyson put an arm about her shoulders. It gave her a sense of protection.

"Did he mean me? Am I black with flaming tongues of hate? Oh!" and she began to sob miserably.

The oracle with his little, blinking eyes sat firm, watching her. She felt like a wriggling insect on the point of a pin.

"There, there; you mustn't mind him.

THE BLUE AURA

Turco's an awfully good sort, only he's rather queer sometimes. Not often, you know. Now run upstairs and change your dress. It's nearly nine o'clock. We'll go out and have a jolly supper together." He followed her into the hall. "Tell me you love me—tell me that I'm going to be all the world to you, as you are to me."

"Yes," she whispered tremulously. "I do love you. It was a lie when I said I hated you. Only, with him there——"

"But Turco knows—he knows everything."

"All the same—I don't want him to know!"

"How ridiculous you are!" Tyson exclaimed, with a chuckling laugh.

Remembering the flaming tongues and livid vortices, Dora forbore to deny that she was ridiculous. She was afraid as she crept up to her room. Something uncanny, because unseen, accompanied her. If her astral body was like that she did not want to be alone with it.

CHAPTER IX.

DORA was going to be married on a Saturday morning—the last day of April. May was an unlucky month for weddings, and Teddie Tyson thought June too far away.

Ivy and Betty were to be bridesmaids, and Turco was to be the best man.

In a characteristic letter Dora conveyed the news to her mother, the supposed châtelaine of the Manor that was not Trelawny Manor.

I am going to marry a young gentleman very high up in the theatrical profession, who draws a big salary. He is very handsome. I shall probably act on the halls with him before long. He and his partner are training me. I work hard all day, as well as keeping my place in the revue; but I am leaving that, of course, although the manager is broken-hearted at the thought of losing me.

The gentleman I am going to marry is named Mr. Tyson. I am the only woman he has ever loved. I should like to buy a wed-

THE BLUE AURA

ding dress, but thirty shillings a week doesn't go very far.

We are going to be married in St. Giles's, Soho, at eleven o'clock on the 30th of April; so think of me. Mr. Tyson is giving an early lunch afterwards at the Milano, a very smart restaurant near here. It will be early, because all of them—the girls and my future husband and his partner—have matinées. We are going to the Metropole at Brighton until Monday afternoon for a short honeymoon, as my future husband can not break his important contracts. The Metropole is a very smart hotel, as no doubt you know. We shall have the best of everything, as my future husband is quite well off.

To Dora's horror, her mother's response to this inflated letter was an intimation that she intended to be present at the ceremony and give the bride away. She would tell her mistress that a young relative of hers was being married. Still, as Dora knew, her mother was anything but unpresentable, and it might be possible to carry off the illusion so lightly given to Betty and Ivy. As for Tyson, she had long ago confessed most of the truth to him. It was no good lying, when Turco of the gimlet gift of second sight was always about.

THE BLUE AURA

A few days after she had heard from her mother, and began to fear that the hint about the wedding dress had been ignored, there came a solicitor's letter containing a twenty-pound note. The solicitor said that his client, Mr. Henry Mayfield, had heard with pleasure that Dora Trelawny was going to be married, and begged to send the inclosed as a small token of his interest. Mr. Mayfield hoped that she would be very happy.

Dora hated the thought of Mr. Henry Mayfield. The most that she actually knew about him was that he had paid for her education at a cheap, poor school, and for her dancing lessons; but it was enough. Her mother obviously stood in awe of him, but it was her mother who must have informed him that she was going to be married.

To Turco she went with her perplexity and the twenty-pound note. She and Turco had become great friends.

Should she return the note with a haughty letter saying that she wanted nothing of Mr. Henry Mayfield?

Turco scrutinized it carefully, turning it about in his thin fingers, wrinkling his brows, as if he were as perplexed as she.

THE BLUE AURA

"You need some money," he said finally. "You want new dresses and a pretty white veil. I couldn't bear to see you anything but beautiful and happy on your wedding day. But why won't you let me give it to you?"

"Oh, Turco, I can't! You've been so kind already. And Ted wouldn't like it. He'd feel hurt if he knew."

"So he would," mused Turco. "Then why not keep this? It was sent with kindly intention—although of the sender I am not so sure."

"That was why you were fingering it so curiously," Dora asked eagerly.

By this time she was quite used to Turco's psychic manifestations. He was like an ordinary man with field-glasses. He could see ever so much farther than she could with the naked eye. Sometimes, however, he did not tell all that she felt sure he saw.

"I didn't mean anything," said Turco. "Keep the money. That is, buy yourself pretty things with it. Whatever gives one innocent joy is good—must be good."

The last words he uttered as if he were a little in doubt.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora kept the money. She kept it long enough to spend it, as Turco advised.

Instead of practicing so much now, she sewed on her wedding dress, and Betty and Ivy came to help her.

The little room at the top of Mrs. Petrosini's house overflowed with the litter of silks and muslins they produced. A sewing machine was hired; paper patterns were bought. Betty and Ivy made their own bridesmaids' frocks.

Both of them had fallen victims to Teddie Tyson's charms. They were enveloped in the romance of the coming wedding. Turco they adored. He had "told their fortunes," not once but many times, since they pestered him constantly. To Ivy he had given a predominance of yellow in her aura, and that meant intellectual development. Betty he teased and joked, side-tracking anything definite she wished to know.

In these days Betty had plenty to eat. Indeed, all of them were well fed. Dora was generous with her lover and his money, now that it was all settled.

Time passed pleasantly. They were so busy, coming and going the whole day long,

THE BLUE AURA

bending feverishly over the humming machine, running out to shops for a reel of cotton or some forgotten lining material, darting across to the Milano for food, then tea in Tyson's big room when he and Turco were finished with their eternal gymnastics, and after that, when they were tired and indifferent, the theater, which furnished the means for existence.

In the theater all three received many reprimands. The manager—whom Dora had described as desolate at the prospect of losing her—was pleasantly relieved when she gave in her notice. He was a kindly man and disliked discharging anybody; but, from a professional point of view, Dora Trelawny had become unbearable of late. Her entire lack of discipline, her airs and graces, and all this business about her wedding had infected the other girls: most particularly Betty and Ivy. So important had Dora made herself in a social sense that the entire ballet hummed with interest in her affairs.

Every girl fished for an invitation to the wedding. Some of them gave Dora presents, and these she was in honor bound to invite. But Betty and Ivy surrounded her jealously.

THE BLUE AURA

It was they who conducted the sewing bees, who held themselves knowingly, who were on intimate terms with the lovers, and best of all with Mr. Turco, the man who told fortunes.

Their selfishness, and the impending loss of Dora, drew Betty and Ivy together. After she was gone it would be left to them to lead the social forces. A new girl must be introduced into the exclusive dressing-room. They held long and anxious councils as to whom they should invite to the honor of their companionship. So the ladies of the ballet vied for this privilege as well as for the invitation to Dora's wedding.

There came the last night that Dora would be with them. The manager, out of his gratitude that she was leaving, gave her a present. It was a scarlet leather handbag, fitted with puff, mirror, and purse and lined with white silk. The consumptive-looking girl of dubious prosperity, whom Dora had consistently snubbed, sent an ivory manicure set in a green velvet case. In a burst of tenderness toward all humanity, Dora, at the eleventh hour, also invited her to the wedding.

The stage hands clubbed together and gave her a silver mustard-pot; the doorkeeper jok-

THE BLUE AURA

ingly wished her "many happy returns"; and the low comedian, who heard of the impending event for the first time, sent out for a magnum of champagne in which the ballet should drink her health after the show was over.

Dora was moved and considerably touched by all this kindness.

The theater held her as in a spell that last night. All the hard times, all the harsh words, the work, the petty squalls and jealousies, were forgotten.

On the stage, when she ought to have been smiling in accepted ballerina fashion, a sudden access of emotion caused tears to trickle down her cheeks. Perhaps there was only one person in the crowded house who actually saw the tears, but for him she was singled out. Thereafter she became interesting to him, and when the performance was over he strolled around to the back to find out, if possible, who she was.

The manager knew him. In his way, he was a man of some importance. He stood in the wings, smoking a cigarette, talking to the manager, his real errand unexplained, while twenty girls divided the comedian's

THE BLUE AURA

magnum between them and wished Dora good luck.

"That kid's going to be married to-morrow—and a good thing, too," said the manager. "I'll be glad to see the last of her."

The man of some importance made a few casual inquiries. He liked the look of Dora. He learned that St. Giles-in-the-Fields would be the scene of the wedding, and that the manager had instructed the stage manager to exert full disciplinary measures at to-morrow's *matinée*. They would be needed.

"She's a ringleader," he added, "and a perfect little pest."

The man of some importance puffed his cigarette and regarded Dora thoughtfully. She was aware of his interest. In her short, white skirt and wreath and garlands of pink rosebuds, she looked charming.

She drank her own health, pirouetted on her toes, inclined her head, smiled wickedly, the center of an admiring throng of girls.

"Lights out!" called a bored electrician, suiting action to his words.

Giggling, pushing each other, the twenty herded into the gangway like fluffy sheep,

THE BLUE AURA

but with considerably more grace. Only a bulb here and there relieved the gloom.

"Lights out," repeated the manager under his breath; then, more audibly: "Were you by any chance going to invite me to supper, Harland?"

"Exactly what was in my mind," replied the other.

CHAPTER X.

IN the dewy freshness of dawn, Dora awoke on her wedding morning. Even in crowded Soho there was the charm of the dawn. Belated market carts, piled high with vegetables smelling strongly of the earth, rumbled past on their way to Covent Garden. The sparrows twittered almost like country birds.

Dora leaned out of her window and chuckled softly when she saw a sleep-rumpled head poked out of the window below. Tyson was awake early, too—smoking a cigarette at this hour!

Dora tiptoed back into the room and soaked her sponge with cold water. Then, leaning out once more, she let him have it. There was a spluttering exclamation, the cigarette was drowned, the water ran over his hair and down the back of his neck. Dora retired with swift discretion.

She was wonderfully happy. The prank filled her with mad glee. It was exciting to

THE BLUE AURA

think that he couldn't sleep, either; that this day, which would not end until after midnight at Brighton, must begin for both of them with the dawn.

Tyson was not only going to be married and to set forth on his scant two days' honeymoon, but between the events he had his professional duties. It would be a crowded day.

As for Dora, she was free to enjoy herself without thought of work. This morning she was not in the least sentimental about leaving the theater. Last night's tears had been a trickle from mere surface emotion. She had forgotten them. She had completely forgotten the man who saw them. Indeed, she did not know that he had seen them.

This was her day—the happiest day of her life.

Before dressing, she smoothed out the bed covers and arranged her glistening wedding finery. There was the gown itself, of silk and muslin and much imitation lace—the splendid joint creation of the three ardent seamstresses. There were the tulle veil in its prim folds, and the wreath of artificial orange blossoms, stiff, waxy, and smelling of the paint on the unnaturally green leaves. There

THE BLUE AURA

were the soft white kid tango slippers with their long ribbons and the pristine stockings of artificial silk. Other garments, more intimate, were threaded with blue for luck.

Dora's bag was already packed for the week-end and her traveling costume hung in the wardrobe. The twenty pounds had gone far.

The wedding garments thrilled her. She remembered the doorkeeper's joke about "many happy returns." There never could be another day like this in her life, never another day so filled to the brim with exquisite, crystal-clear emotions.

Try as she would to make it tidy, the room cumulated a vast disorder. She moved about in a delighted nightmare of white tissue paper and cardboard boxes.

At seven o'clock Mrs. Petrosini brought up her rolls and coffee and carried away the litter. But that only left room for more. The bridal bouquet arrived at an early hour. Turco came and brought a wonderful scarlet cape,—his offering,—and that meant more tissue paper and another box.

Dora and Teddie met on the stairs, where they sat for an ecstatic moment with clasped

THE BLUE AURA

hands and told each other how happy they were. But gay, glad voices from below sent them scampering to their separate rooms. It was nine o'clock, and the bridesmaids had arrived.

They brought their finery in suitcases; for they were not only to dress the bride but to dress with her.

Laughing and chattering, they hauled the cases up the narrow stairs, banging at the bridegroom's door as they passed, and crowing facetiously when he poked out his grinning, happy countenance.

"Well, here we are!" exclaimed Ivy. "My word, old love, but it was a pull all the way from Peckham at this hour. Betty had spent the night at Ivy's home. "Mother sent you this, with her love. She made it herself."

"This" proved to be a pink silk pincushion with bows of ribbon and a petticoat of lace. It, too, came in a box with tissue paper. Dora received it gratefully. How kind of Ivy's mother!

Betty wondered if she could have a cup of coffee or something. She was afraid she wouldn't last until lunch time. Dora sent her down to Mrs. Petrosini.

THE BLUE AURA

They opened the suitcases, and soon the pale blue of the bridesmaids' frocks mingled with the white purity of the bride's garments.

After that it was impossible to combat the confusion. The room was scarcely big enough to hold all three of them, and they got in one another's way considerably, but the hustle and bustle was delightful, and they managed somehow.

Little things sent them into shrieks of laughter. Ivy inadvertently stuck a pin into Betty in fastening her frock, and they almost went into hysterics over that. Dora put on one of her stockings inside out, and had to leave it, because it would have been bad luck to change. That made them laugh, too.

From below, where the best man was giving assistance to the bridegroom, came poundings on the ceiling in response to their mirth. They pounded back. Turco was reported to be in possession of a clean collar and a new necktie—the latter a marvel of sea-green with red polka-dots.

For the twentieth time, Mrs. Petrosini panted up the stairs. It was impossible for her to keep long away from the scene of ac-

THE BLUE AURA

tivity. But this time she had a perfectly genuine errand.

"Lady for you, miss," she said to Dora. "She waits in my *salotto*. I tell her you are dressing to be married. She says she knows about that—she will wait."

Some of Dora's happiness was chilled. Betty and Ivy were looking to her for explanations, and Mrs. Petrosini, like the lady downstairs, was waiting.

"I'll come at once," she said nervously, "as soon as my veil is fixed."

Mrs. Petrosini puffed off and began the descent.

"Who is it?" asked Betty and Ivy in a breath.

"My mother, I think," Dora said.

There was something in the manner of her reply that kept them from asking the further questions they would have liked to ask.

She had put off telling them that her mother was coming, hoping that at the last moment Edith Trelawny would change her mind, or that the strict mistress would interfere. But no, she had come; she was here, and Dora would have to introduce her to her

THE BLUE AURA

friends. She was the one blot on the perfect day.

Silently Ivy adjusted Dora's veil. She and Betty exchanged stolen glances of interrogation, but they could not discuss the interesting subject of the châtelaine of Trelawny Manor until Dora was out of the room.

Had the great lady perhaps come to interfere with the wedding?

It was mysterious, but Dora herself, though pale and uncommunicative, seemed self-contained. Apparently she did not anticipate trouble.

A little doubt of Dora crept into the breasts of the faithful satellites.

"Ted'll let you know when the carriages come," said Dora, giving them plainly to understand that they were to stay where they were until called for.

Then, haughty and subdued, she went down to Mrs. Petrosini's "*salotto*," where her parent was waiting.

CHAPTER XI.

EDITH TRELAWNY, clad in neat navy blue serge, with a festive white hat wreathed in roses and a pair of white gloves she had "borrowed" from her mistress, sat at ease in Mrs. Petrosini's one comfortable chair. A certain prim maidenliness about her rendered it difficult to believe that she was anybody's mother, least of all Dora Trelawny's.

She looked to be about thirty-six, which was the least she could have been; and from whomever Dora had taken fire and *diablerie*, it was certainly not from her. She had sleek mouse-colored hair; pale eyes set too near together; and thin, selfish-looking lips, pressed tightly like the edges of a closed purse. A pair of rimless eyeglasses added to the prim effect of her. With her mouth relaxed and without the eyeglasses, she might have passed for pretty. In fact, it was easy to see that once she had been pretty.

THE BLUE AURA

The eyeglasses, though unbecoming, did much for her, however. They relieved, almost masked, her commonness—gave her rather an air. Because of them the dignity she assumed was fairly embedded in a sort of school-ma'am severity.

By her clothes one knew that she thought a great deal of her personal appearance. The blue coat and skirt were of good material, and their cut, though cheaply fashionable, was not bad. On the hat she had obviously spread herself. It looked almost incongruous; it gave her a sprightliness at savage variance with the eyeglasses and tight-clipped mouth.

A discerning person, such as Turco, might have said that here was a vain, selfish, and cruel-by-nature woman—also one who was supremely dissatisfied with the world, but not altogether so with herself.

Adaptability and cleverness, of a kind, she must have possessed, or she would not be in the well-paid position she enjoyed. Her expression, however, advertised the fact that the milk of human kindness did not run in her veins, and that appeal unbacked by sheer force would carry no weight with her.

Mrs. Petrosini had been quite impressed

THE BLUE AURA

with her; but she had not been impressed with the Italian woman, nor with the "*salotto*."

Alone, she murmured the word "Onions!" accompanied by an uplift of the nostrils and a down-twist of the mouth resulting in a first-class sneer.

If she had said "Pickles" or "Tripe," the inference might be that Edith Trelawny was slangy. "Onions," however, had a serious and definite meaning. Mrs. Petrosini smelt of them, and so did the "*salotto*."

The room scarcely needs description. The landlady was neither very poor nor very pretentious, but she had an eye for color, and she kept the window curtains drawn in the afternoon, so that none of the brilliant hues of carpet and hangings should be sucked up by their original source, the sun.

Edith Trelawny continued to sneer. The expression still marred her countenance when the door opened and Dora, enveloped in filmy white, entered reluctantly.

The two women kissed like the strangers they were.

"Well, you *are* a girl! This *is* a place! Where is your fiancé? Whatever for did you go and get all that cheap lace? Let me look

THE BLUE AURA

at you. Dear me, whatever for did you cut your hair short?"

"It was a rainy day and I didn't have anything else to do," snapped Dora, answering the last of the flow of questions.

"You've a tongue in your head, haven't you?" observed Edith sarcastically.

"Where else would I have it?" asked Dora.

"That's a pretty way to talk to me, when I've come all the way from Hillborough to see you married."

"I'm sorry, but you began on me like you always do—criticizing and finding fault. I—was—so—happy! And now—what's the matter with the lace, anyway? I thought it was pretty."

Dora's lips quivered. She might burst into tears at any moment.

Overhead the bridegroom was dancing a breakdown, and Turco's deep, sweetly melancholy voice could be heard calling to the bridesmaids.

Shadows passed before the windows. The two carriages had come—hired, it must be admitted, from a local undertaker, but none the less festive, for all that. The horses wore

THE BLUE AURA

wedding favors on their bridles, and the coachmen were also decorated. The whips had bows of white satin ribbon.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Edith Trelawny, in a tone of deep disparagement.

All the children in the neighborhood appeared as if by magic. Windows flew open, and dark-haired women leaned comfortably out, prepared to enjoy the spectacle. The waiters gathered in an interested group in the doorway of the Milano. The white cap of the chef gleamed against the bars of his underground prison. He, too, would catch a glimpse of the bride.

"What a neighborhood!" cried the fastidious Edith. "The atmosphere of this house makes me quite ill."

"Mother——" Dora began awkwardly. "Mother—do you mind if I introduce you as Mrs. Trelawny? I told the girls—that is, I couldn't tell them——"

Her speech stumbled. Neither could she tell Edith.

The older woman flushed a painful, ugly crimson. Her haughty air of superiority deserted her for a moment.

"Of course; I don't mind in the least," she

THE BLUE AURA

said hurriedly. "But who is to sign the register?"

"Mr. Turco, for one. He knows. And he's fixed it up with the verger to be the other witness," Dora replied. "I couldn't bear Betty and Ivy to know—and Turco understood that."

So, in the nick of time, Dora got a little of her own back, although no malice was in her mind. It was as she said—that she could not bear the girls to know. She had lied to them to set herself right with the world. It was no fault of hers that she had not been born honestly, nor so highly as she had pretended.

Someone knocked at the door, and then Dora forgot the shadows that threatened to cloud her happiness. The smiling, ugly face of Turco appeared. In addition to the clean collar and new necktie, he was wonderfully furbished up. His baggy trousers almost had creases, showing the will if not the actual accomplished deed. He wore a *boutonnière* of lilies-of-the-valley, grotesquely large, and a pair of white gloves. His boots were overlaid with a lustrous black polish through which their original tan hue gleamed fitfully.

THE BLUE AURA

Following him came the bridegroom, modishly correct in every detail, and as handsome as the heart of Dora could wish. Here indeed was something to which her critical mother could not take exception. There was no denying that Teddie Tyson was a god among men.

If Edith was not impressed, at least she had the grace to keep it to herself. Perhaps Dora's request had thrown her off her balance and made her less sure of her own position.

In the hall Betty and Ivy, in their pale blue muslins, waited with interested, serious faces; and behind them was Mrs. Petrosini, with the angelic child clinging to her skirts.

Dora presented her parent hurriedly.

"This is my mother," she said.

After all, she could not bring herself to say "Mrs. Trelawny." It was the last lie, and she could not tell it—principally because Turco was looking on. Once Turco had described to her the astral thought-form of a lie, and she did not care to give psychic birth to such a thing on her wedding day.

The party filed out and got into the carriages. Turco and the bridesmaids occupied

THE BLUE AURA

one; the bride, bridegroom, and Edith Tre-lawny followed in the other.

So Dora drove off to her wedding.

As the coachmen flourished their beribboned whips, and the black horses, missing the accustomed funereal plumes, tossed their heads lightly, the sun came out, thin and watery, as if tinged with the pale acid of lemons.

The children in the street raised a feeble cheer; the dark-haired women exchanged remarks and withdrew from their windows; the group of waiters dispersed; and the chef's cap disappeared from the underground grating.

CHAPTER XII.

ALTHOUGH her seat was well forward, Edith Trelawny managed to take stock of the congregation.

Dora's late associates, the ladies of the ballet, had settled themselves in one thick group, with the exception of the consumptive-looking girl, who sat apart in her ill-gotten finery. This girl had a dreamy face like a saint's; her eyes were unhappy. She sat by herself because the other girls did not like her, and, except for the gift of the manicure set, she would not be there at all. She was a wistful Magdalen in her isolation.

Tyson's friends were also well represented. They herded together on the other side, and were all of the masculine persuasion; so that the church was not unlike a Quaker house of worship in its main division of the sexes.

Scattered about less compactly, a little furtively because unbidden, were stragglers and curiosity-seekers from the streets. There was an old woman concealing her tray of matches

THE BLUE AURA

under her cape, pretending that she had come in to pray, and vastly astonished to find a wedding in progress. There were the usual bold children who make a business of evading the school inspectors, but who, nevertheless, must pick up their learning somewhere. The wedding was in the nature of an object lesson to them, and one which they enjoyed almost as much as a moving-picture drama.

Twisting her neck during an uninteresting moment in the ceremony, the mother of Dora became aware of a familiar face in the background. She had not seen the man for years, and he had changed, but she recognized him instantly. Like her, he had come to see Dora married, but furtively, as the old match seller and other stragglers had come.

Edith gave him the benefit of a cold stare through her severe pince-nez. Whatever had she seen in him, she wondered. What fools girls were! Dora was very lucky. Dora was not marrying a gentleman, but at least she was marrying. That settled her. With a gold ring on her finger and a Mrs. to her name, she would be proof against the shafts of the world.

A beam of sunlight forced its way through

THE BLUE AURA

one of the old windows as Edith turned to look again. This time her searching glance discovered another man sitting on the opposite side of the aisle, also well at the back; and him she recognized, too. She had reason to fear that he would know her, and turned her head quickly.

He, also, was a gentleman. How had he come to be in the church? Was it his whim to attend the weddings of humble strangers?

He was a noble lord, this other, and Edith Trelawny's acquaintance with him was not of a personal nature. She had merely served as a go-between postman for him and the shockingly frivolous daughter-in-law of her mistress. She had formed the opinion that he was a bad man, albeit a fascinating one.

The presence of these two men in the church had a direct effect upon Edith. She became nervous and excited, and could not keep her mind on the ceremony at all.

The presence of Henry Mayfield was explicable; but that other—Lord Anthony Harland—how explain him? He had not come to bear Mayfield company. She had caught them looking at each other with upraised eyebrows and faint smiles of surprise. They

THE BLUE AURA

were acquainted, then—but they had not come together.

During the prayer Edith Trelawny knelt and offered up a supplication that her secret might be kept. It was the only thing that mattered to her, the only thing that really perturbed her.

It was over, and she hurried into the vestry, pressing hard on the heels of the bridegroom in order to efface herself as quickly as possible.

When the bridal party came out again it was with great relief that she observed both men to be gone. During the drive back to the Milano she whispered to Dora:

“Mr. Mayfield was in the church.”

Dora flushed and made no reply. The information angered her. There was no doubt about it: if the day *could* be spoiled, her mother would accomplish it.

The day was not spoiled, however. Turco saved it.

Over the newly married couple there had dropped, for the moment, a dreamy veil of introspection—the dim church, the solemn ceremony, this greatest hour of their young lives, filled them with a desire to get away from

THE BLUE AURA

the world quickly. The contact with others, particularly with her mother, jarred on Dora's highly sensitive nature. Under cover of her filmy draperies she clasped her husband's hand, and knew that in his slower, less intelligent way he shared her emotions. (Not that she consciously thought him less intelligent than herself.)

It was then that Turco became master of ceremonies. Some of the girls and Tyson's friends had been bidden to the luncheon feast. There were twelve in all until, to everyone's horror, there arrived a thirteenth in the person of the ballet mistress, who was a little late.

What to do?

Even seating someone at a separate table did not quite solve the matter. So Turco decided not to be a guest at all, but to play at being a waiter. He put on an apron and a false mustache,—which might have been up his sleeve all the time, in two senses,—and soon they were all roaring at his antics. The real waiters could scarcely attend to their business, so funny was Turco. Even the bridegroom, who knew most of his partner's tricks by heart, was convulsed. Dora laughed

THE BLUE AURA

until the tears rolled down her cheeks, and then she very nearly cried. The bridesmaids clutched their near neighbors in an excess of hysteria. Even the proprietor came up to join in the fun.

As for Edith Trelawny, between Turco and the one glass of champagne she permitted herself, her fears for her reputation were forgotten. Best of all, she forgot to criticize. The prim mouth relaxed. She took off her nose glasses because her shrieks of merriment dimmed them. It had been long since she had enjoyed such a thoroughly good time.

So Dora was married and a certain chapter closed.



PART II.
PANTALON'S SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

IT was August, and the acrobats had a month's holiday before starting on their long and tedious provincial tour. A holiday from engagements, however, did not mean a rest. It meant harder work, as they were introducing a new turn, and the turn itself would introduce Dora.

There had been some touring already, and Dora had spent the first few months of her marriage very pleasantly at such places as Blackpool, Llandudno, Eastbourne, and Margate. The excitement of travel and change delighted her. They were like three vagabonds, and there was nothing at all to worry them, unless it was a certain little mystery about Turco which Dora felt but could not penetrate. Turco had a secret, and, like Pandora of old, she could not be really happy until she had discovered it.

He both wrote and received long letters. Those that came for him bore the London postmark in what was plainly feminine hand-

THE BLUE AURA

writing; but Dora never saw the envelopes of those he sent. She only saw him engaged in writing them. Turco also bought little gifts which were not always for her, but, from their nature, could be intended only for a member of her sex. This made her jealous, for she was very fond of Turco.

It was vain to question Tyson. The handsome but simple husband of Dora had no chance of keeping a secret against her persuasive wiles, so the obvious conclusion was that he was as much in the dark as Dora herself.

He said Turco always went on like that when they were touring. No, Turco wasn't married. At least, Teddie Tyson hadn't heard of it.

It was also vain to question Turco, which Dora did with persistent energy. His reply was always the same:

"She's my sweetheart, of course."

"But *I* am your sweetheart," Dora would say, with a sly look at her husband. "You know I am your sweetheart, Turco."

Turco, grinning evilly, would then suggest that he was a ravishing lady-killer and had more than one string to his bow.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora usually threatened to fly into a temper at this. She was restrained from doing so only by the thought of the black vortices and flaming tongues into which her astral body would be plunged.

Generally she got as far as stamping her foot.

"You're an ugly old man! You look exactly like a monkey. What woman would pay the slightest attention to you?"

"One of them is doing it now," Turco would say.

He was never angry, no matter how cruelly she insulted him.

Then, varying her tactics, she would plead and apologize and wheedle.

"Ah, Turco—I didn't mean that. I love you, Turco, almost as much as I love Ted. If Ted died I'd marry you——"

"Would you, indeed!" Turco would sniff. "Wait until you're asked."

"But you are fond of me—aren't you?"

Here Dora would slide her arm around his neck and pat the rough stubble of his grizzled hair. She would soften her fierce smile and become as gentle and loving as a cooing dove.

THE BLUE AURA

And all she wanted was to know the name of her rival, his *other* sweetheart.

"At least, you might tell me her name, Turco. Just her name. I won't ask another question."

"Aw—I can't give a lady away! It wouldn't be fair."

"I won't tell anybody," Dora pleaded. "Just whisper it in my ear, Turco."

"Very well, then," replied Turco. And the name he whispered was "Dumpling."

By this time Dora would be thoroughly out of patience and fling him to the winds.

"You old wretch! That's not a name!"

"It's what I call her."

And never, never could any more information be got out of him.

This, then, was the slight cloud on Dora's happiness. Cloud is perhaps a strong word. It was the irritation, rather, of unsatisfied curiosity. Who was this woman in London to whom Turco devoted so much time and on whom he showered gifts?

Where, she asked her husband, did Turco live when they were in London? Strange to say, Tyson could not answer this question, either. Manlike, he had minded his own busi-

THE BLUE AURA

ness where his partner's private life was concerned, and counseled Dora to do likewise.

"The old boy won't tell you if he doesn't want to. Turco's a queer fish."

"I can see that for myself. But why shouldn't he tell us? We're his best friends. Supposing he was taken ill or something and we didn't know where to find him?"

Dora, it will be seen, approached her object from every possible direction.

"Poor Turco! I couldn't bear to think of him being taken ill—all alone, perhaps. I said all alone, *perhaps*, Teddie. Aren't you listening? Haven't you any heart at all?"

The tears would roll down her hypocritical cheeks, and the sight of them would move her husband,—who, far from having no heart at all, was uncommonly soft and tender.

Egged on by Dora, Tyson did try to discover where Turco lodged when in town. That is to say, he asked Turco, and was told plainly that it was no more his affair now than before he married, the inference, of course, being that Turco knew who was at the back of the inquisition.

The young married couple had returned to Mrs. Petrosini's house, which was the nearest

THE BLUE AURA

thing they knew to home. The Milano was convenient for meals, and they had rented a loft in Long Acre for their arduous rehearsals. Dora had a sitting-room at Mrs. Petrosini's, where she could sew and entertain her friends at afternoon tea. They called the loft "the studio," and of course Turco shared the expense of that.

Turco was the plutocrat of the little troupe; for Dora spent all of her husband's superfluous money on clothes, and Tyson himself was not insensible to the charm of raiment. Turco spent so little on his own person that it might be said to be negligible. And, Dora reflected, he could not be spending a great deal on *that woman*, either.

Very cunningly she managed to keep an eye on his finances. Sometimes she thought him uncommonly stingy, and at others she realized that he was foolishly generous.

Turco and his secret worried her. Turco himself baffled her with his air of mystery. Turco was such a very queer man that sometimes she wondered if he was a man at all, and felt tempted to class him among the lower animals. This was mostly when they were at work in the studio, a big, bare, dusty room

THE BLUE AURA

furnished only with the necessary adjuncts of their act—the ladders, barrels, sturdy chairs and tables, and the slack wire. Then Turco displayed an agility anything but human.

Dora was uncommonly clever at learning her new profession. Of course they gave her mostly the ornamental things to do; but she had a wonderful sense of balance, and no fear.

So behold the three of them, on a stifling afternoon in August, hard at work in the loft.

Dora's raiment was reduced to the skimpiest. As far as one could tell, all she had on were the knickers and blouse of a bathing suit and a pair of white canvas running shoes. Tyson was much the same.

Turco's costume, however, differed little from that of every day, except that he had taken off his coat and habitually wilted collar. It was no good for him to practice in knee-breeches, since baggy trousers several sizes too large formed the most laughable of his many professional effects.

It was a killing afternoon. The trio consumed ginger beer and lemonade at intervals; but nothing could allay the heat, and the heat was exhausting.

THE BLUE AURA

Their hands sweated, necessitating constant visits to the chalk-box; and once, because of Tyson's carelessness in that respect, Turco slipped from his partner's grasp when they were swinging from the trapeze and had a bad fall.

The accident took him unaware and he had no time to save himself by one of the quick bounding leaps at which he was adept.

At first they thought he had fainted or worse; but he was merely dazed, and gathered himself together slowly, too spent to scold his partner. He sat on the floor, propped against the wall, while Dora fanned him and poor Tyson remorsefully gave him lemonade.

After that they could practice no more; for Turco was out of it, and the others were shaken and nervous.

Cunning in even this unexpected crisis, Dora realized her great opportunity. Turco must be driven home in a cab. For once, he was off his guard. His smiles came feebly; the pathetic monkey's eyes looked sick.

"Perhaps he's hurt worse than he lets on," Dora whispered to her husband, as they hurriedly dressed behind the screen. "Have you had accidents like that before?"

THE BLUE AURA

"Dozens," Tyson replied rather irritably.
"It took his wind, that's all."

"Oughtn't he to have a doctor?"

"Not a bit of good; he wouldn't see one.
He'll be all right to-morrow."

But Tyson was not very happy, nor so optimistic as he pretended. The accident had been his fault for neglecting to chalk his hands for that particular trick. It was criminal carelessness, and he knew it. Nor was it an isolated case. Of late the handsome young acrobat had seemed to make a habit of carelessness. He knew it himself, was always contrite after the event—as he was now; but nevertheless little things occurred.

And Dora was usually at the bottom of these little things, although neither of them realized it. No one could have blamed her for Turco's fall; but if she had not claimed his attention just as he was getting ready, Tyson would have remembered to chalk his hands.

"You must go home in a cab, Turco," Dora said.

"Have it your own way," Turco replied listlessly.

"And Ted will take you," she added, think-

THE BLUE AURA

ing that now, at last, she would discover where Turco lived. She was too canny to suggest going herself, and was content merely to call the cab.

Turco got up painfully and was helped into his coat. He was still dazed. Tyson insisted on carrying him piggy-back down the stairs. He seemed absolutely wilted.

CHAPTER II.

THE next day, however, Turco was quite well again, and complained of nothing more serious than a shoulder bruise.

It was Dora who did not feel well that day. Hypocritical Dora!

She sighed and groaned and complained so steadily that at last they let her off. Tyson said he did not think she was ill at all—perhaps he had his suspicions of her, for he knew what she knew: but Turco took her part, and she was allowed to go.

Before she left, however, she went to some pains to discover how long they would remain in the studio, and whether Turco would come back to New Compton Street for tea.

“Where’re you going?” Tyson called after her suspiciously, for she had recovered her spirits uncommonly quick.

“Home, of course,” she retorted, flying down the stairs.

She looked very charming, but not wholly

THE BLUE AURA

innocent, as she turned and made a little *move* at him.

By this time poor Teddie knew her for an incorrigible liar when it suited her book to be one. He was terribly unhappy, and dared not tell Turco the cause of it.

Last night, before she would let him sleep, Dora had made him tell her where Turco lived. Teddie had not wanted to betray Turco, particularly since the carefully guarded secret had been discovered in such unsporting circumstances. But he was too much in love with Dora to hold out against her, and she had chosen to badger him at a moment when he would have sold his soul to be allowed to sleep.

Dora had tricked them both, and felt not the slightest compunction about what she had done and meant to do further. The time was ripe for her to probe Turco's secret.

She was not anxious for him to find her out, but that must be left to chance. If the worst came to the worst, she would put a brazen face on the whole matter and ask him what he meant to do about it.

Would Turco quarrel with them? Not likely.

So Dora sped like a determined young

THE BLUE AURA

eaglet from Long Acre to the number in Percy Street where Turcò had been driven the afternoon before, and which he had entered alone, according to Teddie's solemn oath.

Dora discovered Percy Street to be a superior neighborhood to her own. The house where Turco lived might have seen better days, but it was also seeing quite good ones still.

She was jealous of Turco for establishing himself so fashionably and not even inviting them to call.

"He's leading a double life—that's what it is," she told herself. "Very well; I shall soon find out."

The street door stood open, giving a rather spacious vista of stairs and corridor covered with bright-hued linoleum. There were five bells and name-plates, including the caretaker's. It was an old-fashioned house that had been turned into flats.

Dora did not pull the caretaker's bell. Number Three was a brass plate labeled "M. La Turque."

That must be Turco. Oh, what a name! Dora doubled up with silent laughter. She

THE BLUE AURA

had a mind to go away and keep her innocence, so that to-morrow she could address him as "Monsieur La Turcque" as if she had evolved it in her own mind.

But here was the box, and Pandora must lift the lid. It was absolutely essential to her perfect happiness.

She had it all fixed up what to do. If she and Turco's mysterious adored one came face to face, as she hoped they would, the latter must be made to feel miserably jealous. Dora meant to pass herself off as an intimate friend of Turco's, who had every right to seek him out at home.

She would pretend surprise, then snobbish disdain, and finally retreat with her nose in the air and a smile on her lips that would drive the other to suicide.

The blood was racing through her veins in excited anticipation as she bounded lightly up the stairs. In her summer dress of striped muslin and a little hat gay with flowers, she looked so well that she felt uncommonly sure of herself.

There was a moment of pause, however, such as Pandora might have experienced when her fingers actually touched the lid. This

THE BLUE AURA

occurred as Dora stood before the door of Number Three.

It was quite an ordinary door; nothing at all about it to compel hesitation. So Dora, despising her emotion of weakness, lifted the iron knocker and gave the panel a resounding thwack.

There was no answer, and she tried again, leaning her cheek against the door to listen for sounds inside.

What a pity! No one at home. She must go down and ask questions of the caretaker.

It was disappointing not to be able to catch Turco out in some flagrant wickedness.

And then—just as she was giving it up—there was a sound from inside. A voice called out, “Why don’t you come in?”

Why not, indeed, since the door proved to be unlocked?

Dora tried the handle softly.

“Is that you, Turco darling?” called the voice, more audible this time. “I know you—you old monkey! Playing another trick on me, eh?”

“It’s not Mr. La Turcque,” said Dora, standing indecisively in the short corridor which gave the pick of three doors.

THE BLUE AURA

The place smelled of summer roses, and it was pleasantly dim and cool.

There was a short silence; and then the voice, more reserved, asked:

“Who is it, please?”

Why on earth didn't the woman come?

Dora replied haughtily:

“I am a friend of Turco's. Could I speak to somebody a moment?”

“Oh, certainly! *Do* come in.”

At that Dora opened the door of the inner shrine—the door from behind which the siren voice called so sweetly.

Heaven be kind!—what was this? She could have screamed with fright.

As for the poor creature in the invalid chair, it also seemed dismayed, and stared at Dora as at something from another world.

It looked nothing much more than a child in years—an ugly, misshapen girl-child with a big head and little dangling feet at the end of short legs. It had rippling golden hair, soft brown eyes, and a terrible bulging brow.

The room was big and well-kept, not badly furnished, and filled with roses. On the mantel and walls were the evidences of Turco's thoughtfulness—the china vases and

THE BLUE AURA

bowls, presents from Eastbourne and Margate, carefully labeled; a papier-mâché anchor forming a frame for a colored lithograph of the "Victory," that had come from Portsmouth,—all sorts of knick-knacks, and quite a lot of books.

The misshapen creature was propped up with pillows in a wheel-chair. Before her was a deal table on which there were books, drawing materials, and a box of water-color paints. She wore a clean blue gingham pinafore, the sleeves turned back at the wrists, and her hands were astonishingly beautiful.

Into the queer face there came a rapt expression, as of one who has beheld a vision of angels.

"What are you?" she asked in a hushed voice.

Dora trembled from head to foot. It was a strange question. She did not know how to reply. And, now that Turco's secret was disclosed, she would have given her soul not to possess it.

Poor Turco! Poor little monstrosity that had somehow fallen to his care!

The creature seemed to gather courage, and began to meditate aloud.

THE BLUE AURA

"You have the most beautiful physical body I have ever seen. I didn't know there were such people in the world. Turco is handsome, but you—you are wonderful. Yet you are not an astral body. You must be a human being. You are a woman, aren't you? Yes, I am sure of it. How nice of you to come and see me."

Was the poor little creature mad?

Dora backed toward the door, trying not to look as afraid as she felt.

"I'm so sorry—I made a mistake—I'm ever so sorry," she murmured.

"Oh, *please* don't go! Mrs. Smith will be back in a moment. I want her to see you. She only ran out to get our supper. She looks after me, you know, and keeps everything tidy. I'm rather helpless myself. I had a bad fall when I was a little girl. I can just remember it. I was four years old. They—my father and mother—were teaching me to do the back somersault, and the net broke. I was dreadfully ill. But I don't suffer very much now. I'm nearly seventeen. My mother and father went away and left me when I was in hospital. Wasn't that a strange thing to do? So Turco took care of me. Turco

THE BLUE AURA

says I'm the most beautiful thing in the world. But I always thought he was wrong. Now I shall tell him so."

"Don't tell him!" Dora cried, sick with contrition. "He'd never forgive me!"

"Forgive you for what? Turco is so selfish sometimes. He never lets me see anybody but Mrs. Smith, and it's very lonely for me. But he wouldn't be angry. He never is. Do sit down; you'll find that chair very comfortable."

What delicate manners she had, and a smile of the truest hospitality!

Dora only half understood the mystery, even as yet; but she understood enough to be ashamed of herself.

"Have you a name?" the curious creature went on, when her visitor had accepted the invitation to sit down. "Mine is 'Dumpling'—at least, that's what Turco calls me. He's very fond of dumplings,—suet ones, you know,—so he calls me after them. Only his bit of fun, but I like it. What is your name?"

"Dora Tyson," Dora replied.

"Dora? *You're Dora!* Oh, how delightful! Turco is in love with you. He told me

THE BLUE AURA

so. He says he loves you next after me and Mrs. Smith. I wish you would dance for me. Sometimes Turco tries to show me how beautifully you dance. But now I have seen you I know how absurd he was. Do you think this is pretty?"

She switched lightly to another subject, and held up a water-color sketch of what appeared to be a sunburst, a blend of radiant, yet delicate, tones of lilac, blue, gold, and pale green.

"It's very pretty," Dora assented. "What is it?"

"A beautiful, heavenly thought," Dumpling replied seriously. "It's the sort of thought Turco has frequently. I've often seen it. Only I can't paint it as beautiful as it really is. Nor can I give it its true exquisite form. Turco expresses his thoughts most beautifully in a material way, too. He sends me such charming presents. Do you see all those? Turco sends them to me when he is on tour, and he brings me roses and vanilla ices every day, now it is so hot, and lets me off lessons. One day he is going to take me out into the world—when I can bear it, he says. He thinks the world won't please me very much. But he doesn't quite understand. God helps

THE BLUE AURA

you to bear everything, doesn't He? I love God with all my heart and soul. Don't you?"

To the frank simplicity of this question there was but one possible reply. Dora said, "Yes—of course," wondering if she truly did, a little frightened, a little ashamed.

It was difficult to get away. Dumpling poured forth conversation in a stream that could not be stemmed.

"But you'll come again, beautiful Dora—to-morrow, perhaps! Will you ask Turco to let me see the world now? I know why he wouldn't—he was afraid I would suffer; but I can bear it—truly I can. Tell him so. Au revoir, then, if you must go. Au revoir, dear Dora!"

Feeling a miserable, slinking wretch, Dora crept out finally, and encountered Mrs. Smith on the stairs.

She knew it must be Mrs. Smith, because the woman was a hunchback.

CHAPTER III.

HOW describe the feelings of Dora as she made her way back to New Compton Street?

A schoolboy who not only deserves but knows he is going to get a good hiding could have sympathized with her; but, even then, the schoolboy might not have been guilty of anything despicable, and Dora knew she had been.

It was useless to have tried to make a compact of secrecy with the garrulous Dumpling. The poor creature's intellect was far from being impaired, but she had the absolute simplicity of a child. She would tell Turco all about it. Doubtless she was even now telling Mrs. Smith.

Pandora's box had, indeed, revealed a chamber of horrors. Yet was it quite that? Was it, after all, anything like that?

Dora stopped in the street to think about it.

The chamber of horrors was a shrine, for love permeated every corner of it. Even

THE BLUE AURA

Turco's "selfishness" was love. He had kept the poor broken child from the world because he was afraid she could not "bear it."

The thoughtless would turn to gape—the cruel and heartless would laugh—at the sight of that sad body.

Oh, the world was a wicked place, and Turco a saint whom Dora had tortured.

As she neared Mrs. Petrosini's her footsteps dragged. The afternoon was close and muggy. The streets—neglected, strewn with dust and scraps of paper—disgusted her. Most of all she was disgusted with herself.

How could she tell Turco what she had done—how ruthlessly her curious hands had flung open the door of his inner shrine. She did not put it into quite those words, but it was what she felt.

Perhaps he would not have come back with Ted. That thought buoyed her up a little.

But when she reached the little sitting-room he was there—her husband, too, of course. They were having tea.

Dora came into the room with the air of a guilty puppy, and was immediately pounced upon by her adoring but anxious young husband. By rousing her antagonism at once

THE BLUE AURA

he helped her to overcome the sense of humiliation.

"Where have you been?" he demanded, eying her severely.

"For a walk," she replied.

"Feeling better?" asked Turco, adding hot water to the tea.

"There was nothing the matter with her," Tyson cut in. "She was up to some trick of her own, and I can guess what it was. I know where she's been—and I hope she's satisfied."

"You made me what I am to-day;
I hope you're satisfied,"

chanted Dora, with a lump in her throat.

Turco laughed.

"Don't quarrel, or else I'm off. It's too hot to fight."

"Never for Ted. He's always picking on me," said Dora.

Mingled with the bitterness of her own self-reproach was fury at her husband. Why should he see through her so plainly—he who was as stupid as he was handsome?

She attacked him angrily.

THE BLUE AURA

"You make me tired. I have been for a walk, and you can believe me or not, as you like. Who cares? Not me. I didn't marry you to be bullied. All beef and muscle, you are, and think no end of yourself; but if you dare say another word to me I'll scratch your eyes out, and leave a memento or two on your lovely face. Try it!"

Tyson didn't "try it." He contented himself with sullen silence, while Turco poured a cup of tea for Dora and coaxed her to drink it.

By this time she was on the verge of tears. She couldn't confess to Turco with her husband looking on. Turco *might* understand if she wheedled and wept, but Ted was dead against her. Ted would call her a miserable sneak, which she undoubtedly was, and would blame himself, too, for having told her Turco's address. And he *was* to blame.

If he hadn't been so weak, Dora concluded unfairly, it wouldn't have happened.

Meanwhile Turco's psychic powers seemed to sleep. He was amiable and unsuspecting. Perhaps the accident of yesterday had put him out of joint, astrally speaking.

"Well, I must be getting along," he said

THE BLUE AURA

finally. "You two aren't very good company. Make it up by to-morrow, will you?"

Tyson grunted, and Dora attempted a watery smile. She was still like the puppy—feebly beating its tail now.

"Turco dear—Turco, I——"

"What then?" asked Turco.

"Guilty conscience," murmured Tyson, but so low that neither heard him.

"Nothing," said Dora.

She could not confess—at least, not before Ted.

"See you at the studio to-morrow at ten," Turco said, picking up his disreputable soft hat, squashing it down on his queer head. "I wonder if I could get some vanilla ice at the Milano?"

Dora started guiltily, and Tyson looked surprised.

"I think I could—and it would keep if I took a taxi," Turco concluded.

They heard him scampering down the stairs as if already homeward bound with the perishable confection.

CHAPTER IV.

DORA'S husband was very angry. Scarcely had Turco's footsteps died away before he flew at her as only a rather dull-witted young man would have had the courage to do.

"You've been spying on Turco. I knew you meant to do it—you baggage!" he cried loudly.

By way of reply he got a resounding slap on the face. It hurt, but he only laughed.

"What did you find out, then—eh?"

Sullen silence from Dora, who, having delivered her blow, crouched on the hassock like a bristling young tiger cat.

"Couldn't rest until you'd pried into his business, could you? Must go sneaking about behind his back just to find out something that's no concern of yours. You aren't even ashamed of yourself."

Dora quivered. She was engulfed in shame at that very moment, but her husband could not see it. Turco would have seen.

THE BLUE AURA

He blundered on, since he could get no response from her:

"For nearly seven years, now, me 'n' Turco have worked together. We've been good pals. I never tried to pry into his personal affairs. No more did he in mine, except I asked him. And now along comes a woman and makes a sneak out of me as well as out of herself. But you were born that way. You can't help yourself, I suppose. Almost the first words you spoke to me were a lie—giving yourself such airs! Trelawny Manor, indeed! High-born, indeed! You were starving, and if it hadn't been for me——"

He broke off, conscious of saying more than he had meant at the start. There was a look about Dora that frightened him a little. He loved her. It was only because he loved her so dearly that he could hit her so hard. And she was down enough as it was, poor thing. She needed kindness, not killing.

So she retaliated to the best of her ability.

"Just for that, Mr. Tyson, I'll walk out of here and never come back. Thanks for your hospitality. Tell Turco that it wasn't your fault you gave me his address. Tell him

THE BLUE AURA

the woman tempted you. And ask him to forgive me. As for you——!"

Words failed her. She felt that she would burst if she tried to tell her husband what she thought of him.

As she stood before him in her pretty summer frock and the dear little hat gay with flowers, her beauty was a terrible, almost a wicked, thing. The wide smiling mouth, so savage, the glittering eyes, the thin distended nostrils, mocked him. He felt this defiance. With all his strength, he was helpless before Dora.

It couldn't be true that she was going to leave him just because he was obliged to scold her. The fact didn't animate his slow brain until she was actually at the door. Then, in a flash, he comprehended. He was beside her instantly, and Dora suddenly found herself pinioned by the wrists and dragged back.

No; she shouldn't leave him, if he had to tie her up to prevent it! In the beginning he had been unwilling to take her into his life. She had compelled his love almost against his will. Now he would compel at least her obedience.

THE BLUE AURA

"Dora, what were you going to do?" he asked in an agonized whisper.

Dora smiled as one who said: "Oh, yes; you are stronger than I am—in one way. But I can wait." She did not actually say it, however. The smile conveyed her meaning perfectly. It was like a song without words.

"Dora—I didn't mean to hurt you. What did it matter what you told me about yourself? And I'll tell Turco it was all my fault, if you like."

Dora's eyes grew frozen. Another song without words—"Unhand me, ruffian," this time.

He did to the extent of putting his arms around her. She held herself like a ramrod.

"Don't look at me like that! Dora, you don't hate me—you can't!"

"I despise you," said Dora.

The coldness in her voice carried conviction to his slow brain.

She despised him!

He didn't quite know what he had done. In the beginning he had started with the assumption that she was in the wrong. His folly had been in overstating his case and



"SHE SAW HIS SHOULDERS HEAVE, AND HEARD A GASPING SOB.
HER BREATH CAME QUICKLY. 'OH, TED.'"

THE BLUE AURA

getting on to nonessentials. After all, what had Trelawny Manor—that castle in Spain—to do with Dora's sneaking on Turco?

"I'm going," said Dora, and moved toward the door again, taking a cruel pleasure in his misery. Where she was going she had not the slightest idea. That did not trouble her.

She walked slowly and haughtily, expecting at each step the spring from behind that would pinion her again, the importunities that only served to make her more stubborn.

But nothing happened this time, and, turning for a final sarcastic word of farewell, she was surprised at what she saw.

Her husband was on the little hassock, his head bowed to his knees, his arms embracing both head and knees together—an abject, dolorous spectacle, if ever there was one. She saw his shoulders heave, and heard a gasping sob that seemed to be torn from the very heart of anguish.

She paused and her breath came quickly. A delicious sense of warmth permeated her body, a softening of every fiber, like the sweetness of spring stealing into the hard-locked soul of winter. To her surprise, her eyes were moist.

THE BLUE AURA

She could not resist the impulse. It rushed through every vein. The figure on the hassock, abandoned to such abject desolation, had the same power over her as that of a child to break its mother's heart.

"Oh, Ted!"

She rushed to him—crushed her arms about him. She kissed his ruffled hair, and hugged and rocked him in a tremulous tumult of remorse.

Alas! In the crystal of the future one seemed to see him sitting there again like that.

Dora was not going to desert him. She loved him truly, and generously forgave him everything, and he was grateful to be forgiven. They held each other close, and trembled as they thought of the calamity that had so nearly happened.

After that, of course, Dora told him all about Turco's secret; and she was so sorry and remorseful that he had not the heart to reproach her. In the end, he said he would tell Turco, himself, how sorry she was, and take all the blame. For, after all, he *had* been weak about giving her the address.

So cunning was Dora, so cleverly had she

THE BLUE AURA

worked her points, that Tyson really began to think he was to blame. If any doubt crept in, he had only to remember how very nearly she had left him.

In that dread moment the poor young fellow knew what life without Dora would mean to him. It would be death. He thought he could not live without her. He was enveloped in horror whenever he thought of it.

This was the love of whose coming, as a care-free bachelor, he had dreaded. Even when he first met Dora he had had quite another idea of following up his fancy for her. Some bewildering change had taken place in her that night they had dined at Chapin's with Turco. She had become an impudent, self-sufficient young thing all in a flash, and the flash had revealed to him his own longing.

He knew that husbands and wives sometimes left each other; but that it was possible for Dora to leave him gave him such a shock as he was not soon to get over.

In his slow way he realized that he must keep close to her—that, if need be, he must even sacrifice Turco on the altar of his marital felicity.

CHAPTER V.

TURCO, however, did not require sacrificing.

There came a pounding at their door before they were awake next morning, and Mrs. Petrosini announced that Mr. Turco was in the sitting-room, come to have breakfast with them.

Dora dived under the bedclothes, trembling in panic. She could not be induced to stir.

Tyson, thoughtful and apprehensive, dressed himself hurriedly. He had to take the burden of Dora's sin because she—little coward—would not shoulder it herself.

She lay shivering after he had gone out of the room, curled up, making herself almost as small as she felt.

Turco had been so determined to keep his secret. And what a secret! If she had only guessed but faintly!

In a moment Tyson was back, trying to pull her out, to dislodge her as a solid protesting ball of cowardly flesh.

THE BLUE AURA

“Get up, get up! Turco says he’s glad. He was only afraid the girl would be unhappy. He didn’t want her to know how different she was. Dora, darling, he’s forgiven you!”

Dora comprehended at last.

Turco wanted to see her. He had been to Covent Garden and bought her some flowers. He was going to give a dinner party in his rooms that very night, and Dora must wear her ballet costume and dance for the poor little prisoner. They were going to have a regular performance for her. Turco would play the fiddle and put on his clown’s dress, and the room was to be made into a stage. If Dora could only see how pleased Turco was she’d understand that he wasn’t angry.

So Dora dressed herself, feeling shy and guilty, and not knowing at all what she would say to Turco, yet thrilled with happiness because he wasn’t angry.

When she came in he was sitting at table, having his breakfast with Tyson, his little, deep-set eyes blinking, his face curiously simian-like in its inexpressiveness. There had been a time when this resemblance to a mon-

THE BLUE AURA

key had repelled Dora. Now, however, she scarcely ever thought of it; for she loved Turco, and was so used to him that his appearance didn't matter. He was an educated man, too. She herself had just enough education to appreciate that fact. She often used to wonder about him, but she was not repelled any more.

"Good morning," she said diffidently. She looked rather an oddity, herself, in a kimono with the generous color effect of a Joseph's coat, and her eccentric mop of short hair sticking out all on end, just as she had run the comb through it.

"Hello, 'Meddlesome Matty,'" said Turco. Dora blushed.

"It's all right. Only—it mightn't have been," he added.

"I'm sorry, Turco—but you were so mysterious. It was your fault——"

"Ted says it's his fault," Turco observed, "and you say it's mine. Dumpling says it's hers, because she called to you to come in, and she's been forbidden to entertain strangers. Mrs. Smith says it's her fault for leaving the door unlocked. Anyway, it isn't 'Meddlesome Matty's.' Oh, no!"

THE BLUE AURA

"You said he wasn't angry!" Dora cried reproachfully to her husband.

"He isn't," Tyson replied. "It's only Turco's fun!"

"He needn't make fun of me!"

Recovering her spirits, Dora tossed her head.

Turco continued to gibe her at intervals; but he was kind, too, and the bunch of flowers measured his true feelings.

Dora knew that she had touched him on the raw, and that his forgiveness was almost a holy thing. He had set a light in the dark cell of her savage little soul. He had set it there very early, indeed, in their acquaintance,—the night that he invited her to take as much of his money as she needed,—but now it gleamed with a surer, more steady flame.

Of gratitude she knew nothing. She was still a savage in that respect. She only knew that Turco's good will was as much to her as Ted's love. If ever she was in trouble, she thought, she would go straight to Turco. Not that she would ever be in trouble—only, in this world, one never knew.

Soon they were all three on the level of practical politics. Turco wanted to give a

THE BLUE AURA

party for his ward by way of introducing her more fully to the world—a charming bit of which had forced itself upon her yesterday.

He always spoke of her as Dumpling. Dora never knew her by any other name.

Turco was so taken up with his idea that he—who was the taskmaster—called off their strenuous rehearsing and proclaimed a holiday. That was why he had come around so early.

To her great disappointment, Dora was not allowed to help him. It was *his* party. She and Ted were to be guests and performers. All that was required of them was to turn up at eight o'clock in costume—Dora in her new Columbine dress which she was to wear in the music-hall sketch, and Tyson in his white ruffled shirt and black satin knee-breeches.

After delivering this order and finishing his breakfast, Turco trotted off.

During the day Dora tried to prepare her husband more fully for the revelation of Turco's secret.

"Whatever you do, Ted, don't stare at her. She doesn't realize how different she is."

THE BLUE AURA

"As though I would!" Tyson exclaimed.

"And she's queer in other ways—she's like Turco. She makes pictures of beautiful thoughts."

"Pictures?" Tyson was puzzled.

"Water-color drawings!"

"What rot! She must be 'touched'."

"I think she is, a little. I fancy she's even worse than Turco at it. Do you suppose he really sees those things?"

Even Turco's closest friend couldn't answer that question. What visions the strange little man had could only be vouched for by one who saw eye to eye with him, and Teddie Tyson did not lay claim to psychic powers.

Dora longed to. She was tempted almost to lie about it and say that she could see people's astral thoughts and their luminous astral bodies; but it was a dangerous thing to claim with Turco about. Whether he did or did not have that power himself, he would know that she was lying if she said she had.

Dora was now jealous of Dumpling on that score; but it was a harmless sort of jealousy, and she was deeply ashamed of it.

She dressed that evening with as much care and excitement as for a gala performance.

THE BLUE AURA

The Columbine dress softened her, made her less of a savage. In the fluffy white skirts hung with garlands of pink rosebuds, and the wreath to match clamped on her dark hair, she looked charming—so sweet that one found it difficult to believe that harsh words could come from her lips or treachery evolve in her brain. She was the incarnation of grace—poetry personified.

In his way, Tyson was no less attractive; and they were very proud of each other.

Dora threw a cloak over her shoulders. It reached barely to her ankles, and the fulness of the ballet skirts made it stand out ludicrously; but they were going in a cab, so it did not matter.

“We look like a fancy dress ball,” giggled Dora.

“You look like an angel,” her adoring husband replied.

CHAPTER VI.

TURCO in his own home was an altogether different man from the one Dora knew in their theatrical lodgings.

Could she have seen him that day, she would have been surprised.

Turco was master in his own home—an admired being looked up to with awe and love by the two feminine creatures of his household.

To little Dumpling, the prisoner from the world, with her shining, wonderful hair and soft eyes, he was a god among men, the being who very nearly compensated for the world from which he had shielded her.

Then there was Mrs. Smith. The curious thing about Mrs. Smith was that, although she, too, was almost a cripple, she had once won a man's love. There had been a Mr. Smith. When and where Turco had picked her up was a mystery. As long as Dumpling could remember, there had always been Mrs. Smith—a bowed, hobbling little woman, of plain

THE BLUE AURA

visage and tightly screwed gray hair, who did everything required to be done, even to making Dumpling's pinafores and scrubbing out the great practice room on the floor above, where Turco kept himself in professional trim, and incidentally—when he had time—gave boxing and fencing lessons. For in this half of his double life Turco was Monsieur La Turcque, the professor of gymnastics.

All this was news to Teddie Tyson. Intimate as the two men had been, always lodging together when they were on tour, in constant daily association, and grudging nothing of affection and loyalty to each other, it had taken Dora, with her woman's persistent curiosity, to smell out this secret and track it down.

And because she was a woman, perhaps—perhaps because she had entered his heart more deeply than she realized—Turco forgave her as he would never have forgiven Tyson. His forgiveness was no halfway thing. He was doing it in style.

So for a brief glance, now, at Turco in his gymnasium, which was to be the scene of the party.

THE BLUE AURA

In many respects, before he began on it, the room was like the loft they had rented. It was big and airy,—an attic, in fact,—furnished with everything necessary to their profession. There were the tumbling mattress, the swinging bar, the slack wire, the stout white tables, chairs, ladders, and barrels. All these Turco left as they were.

At the audience end of the room a Roman feast was in contemplation. Turco arranged the table and chairs and helped Mrs. Smith to prepare the spread. There were quite a number of things in the way of food, ranging from beer, cold sliced sausage and potato salad, all the way to cream cakes and vanilla ice, the latter packed solidly in a freezing-pail, so there was no worry about its melting prematurely.

There were flowers as well as food on the table, and candles with pink shades set in china holders. Where they had come from only Turco could say. He had his own ideas, and managed to carry them out, somehow.

The crowning achievement, however, was the lighting scheme of the room. He had bought a dozen paper lanterns and hung them

THE BLUE AURA

by cords from the ceiling. It was not his fault that they were not all on the same level, but the effect was better than if they had been.

How beautiful they looked when he lighted them!—like great golden oranges and pagodas of richly stained glass.

He clapped his hands, turned a somersault in his absurdly comic clown's costume, and went downstairs to fetch poor little Dump-ling.

The girl was waiting for him in a fever of impatience. Her face was pale, her eyes like stars. Mrs. Smith had dressed her in a white pinafore that covered her shrunken feet; her hair was tied back with a blue ribbon, and she had a blue sash.

Turco appeared to be overcome by her splendor. He struck an attitude denoting shock, fell over himself backward, recovering his balance with marvelous dexterity.

The girl laughed shrilly.

"Oh, Turco, you *are* so funny! But do let us be quick. It's nearly eight. You said they'd be here at eight. Suppose they don't come?"

The mere thought made her lips quiver.

THE BLUE AURA

All day she had had a suspicion that it was too much of a fairy tale to come true.

She held out her thin arms, the hands so beautiful that they seemed carved by a sculptor in transparent wax.

"Take me up now, Turco! I can't bear to wait. I ought to be there when they come. They'd think it odd to see you carrying me."

The painted, grinning smile of Turco covered the tenderest of expressions as he gathered the little figure into his arms. She clung about his neck, scolding him mercilessly.

"Oh, Turco, you clumsy fellow! You're crushing my pinny. Do be careful. I shall look a sight, I know. Oh, do be careful of the banisters, Turco—there's dust on them, I'm sure. Hark, isn't that the street door?"

She craned her neck over his shoulder, peering down into the dim well of the stairs.

"Yes—yes! They're coming! I heard Dora laugh. Do be quick—you old slow-coach."

But Turco would not be any quicker than he saw fit. She had forgotten, but he remembered that the least jolt would give her intense pain. Perhaps at the moment, however, she would not have felt it.

THE BLUE AURA

By the time the guests had climbed the stairs Dumpling was in her chair and had smoothed her rumpled feathers.

More astonishing to her, even than Dora, was Teddie Tyson.

As he came into the room in the train of the radiant Columbine, Dumpling's lips parted in an exclamation of surprise. Besides Turco, the doctor was the only man she had ever seen, and the doctor was neither youthful nor an Adonis.

She flashed a reproachful glance at Turco. These wonderful beings belonged to the world from which he had kept her. She, too, belonged to the world. She was of the same race—a human being like beautiful Dora and Dora's more than beautiful husband.

There was something about Dora's husband that entered straight into the heart of the little cripple and stabbed her with a pain more poignant than any physical suffering. He made of Turco a mere nothing.

The pain, however, was lost in the joy Dumpling experienced. She could have taken wings then and there and gone to glory.

As for Dora—a strange feeling took possession of her the moment she entered the

THE BLUE AURA

room. In a sense, she was back on the stage—but with a difference. The paper lanterns charmed her. She was charmed with the vision of herself in the great wall mirrors.

Life had cast off its sordid, everyday aspect under a combination of the grim, the grotesque, and the beautiful. Yet it was still life—*her* life—and she was living it in the rich radiance of those lanterns, with paint on her face and flowers in her hair; she was living it free and freakish in her short, fluffy skirts with a satin-clad toe that could, if it chose, point five minutes to twelve.

And only yesterday she had meant to cast her life behind her! She had meant to leave Ted—and for nothing at all.

The crippled girl was begging her to be seated, with an air of childish dignity.

"This chair, dear Dora, next to me—and Ted on the other side. Mrs. Smith usually eats with us, but to-night she says she won't—I can't think why."

Mrs. Smith, in a clean white apron that very nearly covered her, glared at Dumpling.

But Turco cried loudly:

"Neither can I. Why shouldn't she? Sit

THE BLUE AURA

you down, Mrs. Smith, and we'll all wait on each other."

Dora smiled at her, and Mrs. Smith's severity relaxed. She allowed herself to be coaxed to the table, and she and Turco sat together at the foot. Dumpling was the head, as should be, with the visitors from the world on either side of her.

Immediately the fun grew fast and furious. Turco saw to that. This was his party, and he meant it to be a success. He was something to laugh at, and here in the bosom of a lately expanded family circle he was more than a mere doyen of clowns: he was the very soul of mirth, just as Dora was poetry personified. And with his mirth was mixed the teasing, indulgent love of the ideal pater-familias—clown and father in one.

To Dora he was more irresistible than ever. She wondered if he could be the same man for whom she had felt such repulsion that night at Chapin's. She had been frightened when he paid for her meal—terrified when she was left alone with him. Yet it was the same Turco. Unless she was mistaken, he was wearing the very same red tie.

How kind he had proved to be that night,

THE BLUE AURA

helping her when the world was crumbling beneath her feet, when even Ted—she glanced across the table at her adoring husband—yes, when even Ted had been thinking lightly of her, ready to trade on her need for food.

Dora shivered. Was it an omen of disaster that she should shiver?

“Are you cold?” asked Dumpling. The shiver had been accompanied by an audible “B-rr!” for Dora’s thoughts had an uncomfortable way of expressing themselves not only astrally—according to Turco—but physically, which ordinary mortals could understand.

“Something is walking over her grave,” said the sepulchral Mrs. Smith.

This was a cheerful idea.

“It’s the ice,” said Tyson. “Ices always give Dora a chill.”

Perhaps it was the ice.

Turco picked up his fiddle. He didn’t want Dora to shiver any more.

“Is it too soon after supper to begin?” he asked.

“Oh, no; *do* begin!” cried Dumpling. “I want Dora to dance. I want to see her stand

THE BLUE AURA

on her toes and twirl, like you showed me, Turco."

Dora took the center of the cleared floor on tiptoe, with arms extended, wrists drooping, head slightly to one side.

"Ladies and gentlemen," announced Turco, ready with his fiddle, "I have now to introduce the greatest of all ballerinas—Mademoiselle Dora."

Then, with a professional leer, he added:

"A hush fell over the orchestra
As the leader drew across
The entrails of the agile cat
The tail of the noble horse."

No sooner said than done. As a violinist Turco might not have been much good; but as a fiddler he was perfect.

Dumpling, Mrs. Smith, and Dora's husband strained forward, watching not only Dora but the eccentric fiddler as well. Turco was her discreet but melodious shadow.

"Great!" Tyson cried. "We ought to work that into the act."

He would have applauded but for Dumping, who sat under such a spell of enchantment as made him wish he had not spoken.

THE BLUE AURA

The spell, however, was broken from outside.

The door opened quite casually, and two men from the world appeared. They were what Edith Trelawny would have designated as gentlemen—also she would have recognized them both.

Dora stopped, and held her pose unconsciously. Turco ceased from fiddling.

“I’m sorry; are we intruding?” asked the younger of the men.

He wore a little mustache brushed up at the corners, and a monocle attached to a black ribbon. His expression was quizzical, and as he spoke he looked, not at Turco but at the lovely Columbine, still on tiptoe with her arms outstretched.

“I was under the impression that this was our night, Monsieur La Turcque. I couldn’t make anyone hear, so we just came up. This is my friend, Mr. Mayfield. Weren’t you expecting us?”

Under his grotesque make-up, poor Turco was sadly crestfallen. He came forward apologetically.

“Beg pardon, my lord; it was my mistake.

THE BLUE AURA

I'd clean forgotten your boxing lesson. We—I—we're having a party."

Lord Anthony Harland smiled—at Columbine. She let herself down on her heels with a little thump, and minced across the room in leisurely fashion, affecting a vast unconcern.

"So I see. May we stay? This is the great professor, Mayfield—but it doesn't look as if we'd get our little bout with the gloves tonight."

"How do you do, sir?" said Turco, politely acknowledging the introduction.

The second man nodded in offhand fashion. He, too, seemed interested in Dora. He had seen her only once before in her life—at her wedding. But he had every reason to be interested in her, and he remembered her face at once. He was neither as young nor as attractive as his companion.

How describe him? One of those men who has outlived his youth, but not the illusion of it. A dandified old man with thinning hair that looked to be artificially darkened, plastered in streaks over the dome of a narrow skull. A clean-shaven old man, with deep lines in a thick, sallow skin, and a decided "waist" to his tail coat. He had thin, old

THE BLUE AURA

hands marked with blue veins, jaded eyes, and a cynical mouth. Above and beyond all, he was extraordinarily neat, as if polished and put together by his valet with the utmost care.

"I hope the professor will allow us to stay," he murmured. "It seems a fascinating party."

He had a soft, almost feminine voice.

Dora was staring hard at him now. She looked hateful.

Turco did not know what to do, but Dump-ling solved the problem for him. She leaned forward from her cushioned chair as graciously as any queen and with truly royal unconsciousness.

"Of course you may stay. *Do* sit down. Dora was dancing for us. She will be charmed to dance for you, too."

Harland winced as he glanced at the speaker; but his companion showed more self-control.

"Thanks very much. And who may you be, young woman?" Mayfield asked.

"My adopted daughter," Turco put in abruptly, "and this is Mrs. Tyson and Mr. Tyson, my partners—Lord Anthony Har-

THE BLUE AURA

land and Mr. Mayfield—make you all acquainted.”

“Delighted, I’m sure,” said Lord Anthony.

He went straight over to Dora and began talking to her.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR a few moments it began to look as if the party, as a party, would be a failure.

The arrival of the strangers had put a damper on things. Dora did not want to dance again. Tyson was stiff and self-conscious, and it seemed as if Turco had suddenly and completely lost the art of being funny.

Mrs. Smith, ridiculous in her big white apron, hobbled about, clearing away the table, making a clatter.

The crippled girl sat silent in her cushioned chair, her soft brown eyes inquiring of everybody. Tyson also sat silent beside her, his eyes hard and resentful.

The dandified Mr. Mayfield was engaging Turco's attention, asking innumerable questions about the art of boxing, and inquiring into the purposes of the various tools of the acrobats' trade with which the room was littered.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora was at complete ease. She had ceased to regard Mr. Mayfield. After all, what was he to her? It was something to be talking to a lord, and one who evidently found her pleasing.

After a few complimentary preliminaries, Harland broke the news to her that she was not altogether a stranger to him.

"Once I saw you crying. It was the first time I saw you. Can you guess when—and where?"

Dora flashed her amazing fierce smile at him, eyes and teeth glittering.

"Go on! That's a good one! Tell another."

"It's the truth."

The monocle winked back at her, and the ends of the little mustache swept upward more decisively.

"It's a lie!" said Dora, forgetting that he was a lord just for that instant.

"I shouldn't have noticed you if you hadn't been crying. The tears were simply rolling down your cheeks. And it was the night before you were married, too. The manager told me all about it."

"Oh! Now I remember!" Dora exclaimed. "You came behind that night. I saw you

THE BLUE AURA

talking to Mr. Symonds. But I wasn't crying; we were having champagne."

Harland threw back his head and laughed, and the monocle dropped.

"Never mind; I won't tease you. The next day I went to see you married——"

"With Mr. Mayfield?" she asked quickly, a flush dyeing her face.

"No—by myself. Come to think of it, Mayfield was there too."

He glanced at his friend; but the latter was busy at that moment encouraging Turco to explain the mysteries of the trapeze.

"Are you and Mayfield friends?"

"No," Dora replied shortly. "I don't know him."

"Then how did you know he was at your wedding?"

"My mother told me," she said, too confused to concoct an untruth.

"Ah, your mother knows him?"

"She did once—but what's it got to do with you?"

"Nothing at all. I bow to your decision, fair Columbine. Let us change the subject, by all means. Is it not delightful weather we are having?"

THE BLUE AURA

"It is not!" said Dora snappily.

At this point little Dumpling's patience ended. She had clamored for the world, but she did not want it in such large doses.

"Dora—dear Dora—please dance again. Turco, do something! You said it was to be just like the theater—and nobody's doing anything."

Harland turned and stared at her coldly. He did not wince this time, but his expression was one of distaste.

"The girl is speaking to you, I believe," he said to Dora.

"Oh, Dumpling, do you really want me to?" she protested.

"Why shouldn't you?" Tyson put in sullenly, having at last found something to say. "That's what you came for, isn't it? Didn't we promise Turco——"

"If we're spoiling the party, Lord Anthony and I will go at once," said the courteous Mr. Mayfield, hurrying forward.

He cast a lingering look at Dora, as if he would like to be friends with her, but hardly dared.

His remark awakened everybody's conscience on the score of hospitality. Protest-

THE BLUE AURA

ing that they were both very welcome,—that, far from spoiling it, the party was all the better for their presence,—Turco seized his fiddle, Dora spun into the middle of the room, beckoning to her husband, and Tyson shook himself out of his sulks and followed her. He, too, could dance.

The strangers gave an enthusiastic round of applause, and Dumpling laughed aloud in her excitement. Mrs. Smith, hugging a pile of plates, hovered like a dour little shadow in the doorway.

Once started, the ice was broken.

Dora danced and danced. Turco fiddled and fiddled.

Then, when she was tired, and leaned laughing and breathless against the wall, Turco threw aside his fiddle and leaped upon the slack wire; and from there he bounded to Tyson's shoulders, and the two of them executed their marvelous interlocked somersault the whole length of the room.

The soft thud of their bodies, each movement reflected in the great practice mirrors, filled the watchers with subdued excitement. It was contagious, like all rhythmic movement. They wanted to dance, to leap and

THE BLUE AURA

bound, to express themselves in physical action.

Overhead the lanterns swung gently in the rush of air produced by the gymnasts' gyrations.

The crippled girl strained forward, pale, her waxen hands folding and unfolding, her head inclining sympathetically.

Harland played nervously with the ribbon of his monocle and twisted the ends of his mustache. The blood rushed hotly through his veins. The pungent dust raised by the flying, thudding figures itched his nostrils.

Dora, leaning in palpitating exhaustion against the wall, seemed somehow a symbol to him—an invitation to or cause for merciless combat. Looking at her, he knew now why he had been so interested in Dora long before. She was not merely a woman. She was the soul and body of woman, as Lord Anthony Harland understood her.

He shrewdly suspected his friend's relationship to the girl, and the idea that this girl in the Columbine's dress was Henry Mayfield's daughter added to her piquancy.

In his way, Lord Anthony was a poet—he

THE BLUE AURA

visualized voluptuously; and no part of the grotesque scene was lost on him.

But through it all his pulse drummed with heavy insistence. He wanted to be more actively in the picture, to take his own part in the violently agile and graceful performance.

He turned to his friend with a joking remark. Of them all, Henry Mayfield alone was unmoved. The old man who would be young had given himself away by his perfect composure. The blood did not run hotly through his veins; he was not stirred in the least.

"I say, La Turcque," he drawled, "his lordship wants a round or two with the gloves. Would the ladies object?"

Turco, glistening with perspiration, leered in agreement.

"I'd be pleased—I'm sure they'd like it."

"Love it!" shrilled Dumpling, who by this time was almost off her head.

"I should have to take off my coat——" Harland began.

"And shirt, collar—and monocle," Dora finished for him.

Her forwardness did not please her hus-

THE BLUE AURA

band. He frowned at her. But Dora took no notice. She was whirling around on her toes again, and pointing abruptly at five minutes to twelve.

"I can lend you a jersey," said Turco. "Only you'll have to wait a goodish bit while I clean off this make-up."

"Don't bother," Dora's husband spoke up. "I can give his lordship all he wants."

Dora glanced quickly from one man to the other. She saw them exchanging polite smiles. What was the matter with Ted? Why should he want to box with Lord Anthony Harland—pushing himself in where he wasn't asked?

"Right you are," said Harland. "The professor's reach is a bit short for me—and, on the other hand, he's too swift. You'd be just about right."

Dora again gave her quick glance. Those last words of the noble lord's sounded almost like an insult; but perhaps Ted hadn't noticed.

Turco piloted his guest to the dressing-room; but Tyson unconcernedly stripped off his ruffled silk shirt in the presence of all, and was revealed naked to the waist. He walked

THE BLUE AURA

over to the rack and began choosing the gloves.

Dora felt snubbed, somehow. Why hadn't he looked at or spoken to her?

"Will they hurt each other?" quavered Dumpling; for she, too, sensed the serious atmosphere.

"Bless you, my child, not in the least," said Henry Mayfield.

He had settled himself comfortably in a chair, from which his interested gaze centered almost wholly on Dora. He did not know that she knew him. He was trying vaguely to recall the past in her; but it was difficult. A man's flesh and blood is never so little his own as when it reveals itself in a creature like Dora.

"Her mother must have been a wonderful woman," he thought.

He was cynic all through, but a terribly just one, although mistaken in this instance. Dora's mother was not a wonderful woman.

Without his eyeglass, and in one of Turco's white jerseys, Lord Anthony looked strangely different. He had, mused Dora, almost a ruffianly appearance. She admired her husband more, but she did wish that Ted would

THE BLUE AURA

smile. It seemed to her that he was overawed by the prospect of boxing with Lord Anthony; yet in the beginning he had pushed himself in brazenly.

The two men leaped upon the mattress. Turco was to be the referee. He examined the gloves and approved of Tyson's choice.

"Shake hands," called Dora jeeringly.

They did, and squared off.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was a beautiful fight. None of the spectators could deny that. It quite carried them off their feet, including the blasé Mayfield.

Before the first round was over it became apparent that the opponents were well matched. This rather disappointed Dora. She had expected Ted to be superior, as a matter of course. She had expected to see him giving points and feinting punches. But he gave nothing, and the punches were very real on both sides.

Slap! bang! went the gloves. Tyson's supple body grew pink and was bathed in glistening perspiration. His dark hair straggled over his forehead in damp patches. He was constantly flinging back his head to get it out of his eyes.

His opponent, even in the white woolen jersey, looked cooler. There was an insolent twist to Lord Anthony's little mustache, and he made frequent jocular remarks.

THE BLUE AURA

"That's right! Come on again, Buster! . . . Almost, but not quite. . . . Aha, would you tickle my ribs? . . . Fanning the air, again. . . . How's that? . . . Whugh!—you would, would you?"

Tyson would, but couldn't. The color had risen from his torso to his face, and now inflamed his eyes. He was growing angry.

"They *are* hurting each other!" Dumpling cried softly. But no one paid any attention to her. She twisted helplessly in her chair, wishing to get away, and finally covered her eyes with her beautiful hands.

"Time!" called Turco, who was holding a turnip of a watch.

Tyson picked up a coarse towel and drew it smartly across his shoulders to dry them. The night had grown stifling.

"Sorry I haven't a hairpin to lend you, Ted," Dora said.

He did not answer her. She wondered why he seemed so morose—why he need take everything she said so seriously.

Harland, breathing rather fast, met her glance with a smile.

"Some sport, eh? Your husband's a fierce

THE BLUE AURA

customer, Mrs. Tyson. Knocks spots out of our little professor, here."

"He doesn't seem to be able to do much to you," Dora replied, thus heaping a generous supply of fuel on the flames. "I should say that you were more than Ted's match."

Tyson threw down his towel.

"Have you had enough?" he asked insolently.

"Dear me, no," put in Mr. Mayfield; "it's just beginning to be interesting."

"But have *you* had enough?" Tyson put the question more aggressively still, and this time directed it straight at his opponent.

"I think we might have another round, unless you are tired," Harland replied. "I shall have to watch out for myself this go."

"Time's up," said Turco, who had lost himself completely in the keen sport.

The crippled girl shivered, but tried to smile. She wondered why she, alone of them all, was frightened. It was only play. They had told her so. Yet it seemed as if the heavy slap-slap of the gloves must hurt, even when they only banged against each other.

Tyson opened the second round with a

THE BLUE AURA

bull-like rush. Such tactics do not always serve; but in this instance Harland was taken off his guard and very nearly off his feet. Before he could recover his wits he was getting it left and right.

"Easy, Ted!" Turco cautioned.

"Go for him, Tony!" Mayfield advised, in his thin, feminine voice.

The two men, crouching like beasts, their arms revolving rhythmically, circled each other more slowly.

Harland was getting angry, too. He no longer joked. The mustache was twisted out of its sarcastic line into something much less coherent.

A mocking little laugh from Dora turned the trick as far as Tyson was concerned. He was not a quick-witted young man, but he would have had to be a veritable dunce not to realize that Dora was on his opponent's side.

With the second rush he caught Harland a swinging uppercut with his left. It sounded as if the noble jaw had been broken. Down he went like a log; and Turco, forgetting that it had started as a friendly set-to, gave him the count in true professional fashion.

THE BLUE AURA

It was more than ten seconds, however, before Lord Anthony came to.

Dumpling cried quietly and unnoticed in her cushioned chair. She had known that something dreadful was going to happen.

It was not as dreadful as she feared, however; for presently Lord Anthony sat up, dazed, laughing, and holding his jaw ruefully.

"Give you best, Tyson," he said. "Sorry I was such an ass. Right, professor; no more of that flowing sponge, if you please. No, Mrs. Tyson, my jaw-bone is intact, thank you, although I must look a pretty sight."

He struggled to his feet, and insisted upon shaking hands with his late opponent.

"You must give me another lesson some time. You beat the professor hollow. He isn't a patch on you. He's much too easy with me. If I could spar regularly with you, Tyson, I might learn to use the gloves some day."

Tyson muttered an apology. It was difficult for him to explain why he had forced those rushes, and why, above all things, he had committed the sin of actually knocking out his opponent.

He was—although Dora had been unable

THE BLUE AURA

to see it—by far the better man. Perhaps, for her sake; he had to prove it.

After that the party broke up. Turco suddenly discovered how tired Dumpling was. It was past midnight. He encouraged his guests to leave, since nothing would induce Dumpling to be carried out in their presence.

Dora and her husband drove back to New Compton Street in an open taxicab. During the drive they said not one single word; each was slightly displeased with the other.

Lord Anthony Harland and Henry Mayfield left the house on foot.

"Rather a savage, that fellow," Harland commented, nursing his face with his handkerchief. "What the devil he wanted to do that for I don't know."

Mayfield delicately flicked the ash from the cigar he was smoking.

"Do you mean to say you really don't know?" he asked.

"I should say not—except his beastly bad manners. Used to sparring with thugs, I suppose. If I'd guessed what was coming, I'd 've tried my hand at being a thug, too."

Mayfield laughed.

THE BLUE AURA

"It didn't occur to you, perhaps, that the woman was his wife."

"Who? What do you mean?"

"Columbine."

"Of course I knew she was his wife."

"And have you never had a husband jealous of you before, Tony? Really, my boy, you positively asked for it."

Harland shrugged his shoulders and muttered, "Rot!" But deep down in his heart he was not altogether displeased.



PART III.
THE POOR CLOWN.



CHAPTER I.

THE Tyro-Turco Troupe of Comedy Acrobats opened their season at the Walbeck Empire, Birmingham. From there they played Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool, and then skipped lightly over the border into Scotland, where they were immense favorites.

The first few months she had been on tour Dora enjoyed herself very much; but this time she did not like it. The vagabond life had its tiresome side. Their lodgings were not always comfortable. The long train journeys on Sundays, when she wanted to sleep late, were a great infliction. Turco and Tyson always had so much to do that they were not much good to her in a social way. The luggage alone kept one or both of them constantly occupied; for, although the troupe was well paid, the acrobats practiced the important economy of attending to their own properties.

Dora's part was to look after the ward-

THE BLUE AURA

robe, and that was a business in itself. There was the cleaning, pressing, and renovating to do. Some part of Turco's professional garments needed attention after every performance. Her own dresses were bother enough.

There was always the worry about the package from the cleaners' not arriving in time or following them promptly. There was always shopping to do, meals to order, rehearsals when there were not performances, and fights with landladies.

This tour was no picnic.

Dora could not say that she enjoyed herself, and when she did not like a thing it was no secret.

It seemed to her that they piled more than a fair share of the labor on to her. She forgot that her work in the theater was light compared to theirs. Turco's was exhausting, and sometimes there were three performances daily.

On these nights poor Turco would fall into bed without any supper. Yet he never neglected the daily letter to the little prisoner at home.

The hardships had less impression on Teddie Tyson, but he, too, suffered exhaustion,

THE BLUE AURA

and it made him irritable. He and Dora quarreled frequently over trivial things—there was never anything very big to quarrel about. Disputes grew upon them as a habit.

Ted said that Dora was always interfering. He could do nothing as in the old days. His friendly, sociable hours with Turco were gone. Whenever the two of them got away together for an hour or two to smoke the pipe of peace, it was by stealth.

Dora complained not only of monotony and overwork, but of neglect. The men were too occupied to need her. They worked like fiends. They thought of nothing but their work and how they could improve it. What the audience “rose to” and appreciated was the only thing that really thrilled them. They nursed their points, elaborated favorite tricks, got it down “all smooth and oily,” “put it over,” and after that they cared for nothing but food and bed.

That she was not one with them was Dora's fault to a certain extent. As a lady of the ballet in a big musical show, she had no personal responsibility, and her discipline had never been perfect. Now she had responsibility, and it irked her. As a member of the

THE BLUE AURA

Tyro-Turco Troupe she was bored. She did what she was obliged to do, and although she did it very well, it had no savor for her.

In London—well, London was different. She was a true Cockney at heart, and these other cities, so different from London, these audiences who had to be studied differently, the north-country tongue, the very aspect of the houses and people, made her sick for New Compton Street.

The first tour had covered seaside resorts during the summer months, which was no real wrench from London. But this was different.

When they were on the homeward trek once more, she could have cried from joy. They spent Christmas at Newcastle-on-the-Tyne and very little else; for Dora was saving up to buy new clothes when they got back to London.

Each week found them a little nearer. The third week in January, a cold, rainy Sunday, they arrived at Euston at four o'clock in the afternoon. Turco parted from Ted and Dora at the station. He was going where a warm and cheerful welcome awaited him, and he was very happy.

THE BLUE AURA

The Tysons, with their personal luggage, went to Mrs. Petrosini's.

In spite of her pleasure at getting back, Dora was in a bad temper. She was thoroughly tired out, for one thing, and the rain depressed her. Worst of all, they had no holiday in prospect, for the troupe opened the following week in Chiswick. It was like a Tantalus cup. One was in London, but could not taste the joy of being there.

In the cab, Tyson reached for his young wife's hand.

"Glad to get home, kid?"

"We've got no home—not a proper one," Dora said sullenly.

"That's right; we haven't," he replied, a little surprised, for the question had never bothered him before. "How would it do for us to take a flat or something?"

"What's the good, when we can never be in it?"

"Oh, sometimes we could. Like now, for instance."

Dora shrugged her shoulders. She really didn't know whether she wanted a flat or not.

Tyson tried again:

THE BLUE AURA

"It's been a hard tour. The provinces are killing. I always say, Deliver me from the provinces in the winter."

"Or at any other time," snapped Dora.

"Yes—I guess you're right," he admitted, with a sigh. "Turco and I didn't use to mind—not so awful much. But for a girl it's different. Perhaps you'd like to cut the show, Dora?"

"And lose my ten quid a week? Not likely!" said Dora.

"I can take care of you right enough."

"Yes, and you can spend a healthy lot on yourself, too. Much I should get when you'd handed in your expense account."

Tyson did not argue the point. Fine raiment was his weakness; but in these days, if he bought himself silk hose and underwear, he paid more than the mere market price for the luxury. Dora made his conscience sweat for it.

"Sometimes I think you hate me," he said meekly.

To this Dora made no reply. Sometimes she undoubtedly did hate him. For her there were but two emotions—love and hate: and one could not love all the time.

THE BLUE AURA

"You've never been quite the same to me since that night at Turco's," he went on.

"You were a beast that night!" Dora stated vehemently.

"Because I put his high and mightiness to sleep?"

"Rotten bad form," drawled Dora, who had learned a few mannerisms at her cheap little boarding-school.

"He deserved it!" Tyson exclaimed.

"You were jealous—that's why you did it," she taunted. "You saw I'd made an impression on him."

"Jealous or not, I laid him out, and I meant to. I'll do it again, too, if——"

"Likely a gentleman like Lord Anthony Harland would ever give you a chance!"

"Gentleman, is it! I suppose I'm not one?"

"*You!* Next you'll be saying Turco is a gentleman."

"He is."

"Oh, *mon chapeau!* Hark at you!"

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing. Only you make me laugh."

"Laugh away, you heartless girl. You

THE BLUE AURA

make me think of a tale Turco once told me. I wonder what he sees in you, anyway?"

"Turco understands me," said Dora, who did not in the least mind being called heartless. "What was the tale?"

"About a girl in Denmark—anyway, the chap who first told the tale was a Dane, Turco said. She threw down a loaf of bread into a mud puddle to step on, so's to keep her new shoes tidy. And the bread was really her mother's heart. That didn't save her. It was a quagmire, and she sank down, down, and horrible things happened to her—all because she was so proud and heartless."

"How interesting!" said Dora. "And you say I'm like that! Little you know about my mother. She hasn't got a heart to tread on."

Dora looked out into the rain, and her lips quivered. Ted accused her of hating him, when it was quite plain that he hated her.

The taxi turned into the familiar street, and, assuming cold indifference, Dora left her husband to wrestle with the luggage while she went in to see if their rooms were ready.

CHAPTER II.

THERE was a cheerful fire in the sitting-room. Mrs. Petrosini had been warned of their expected arrival. Tea would be forthcoming immediately. The Tysons were well-paying lodgers, and Dora was now treated with a respect from Mrs. Petrosini she had never enjoyed in her maiden days. Those days and their hardships were forgotten both by her and her landlady.

Having disposed of the luggage problem, Tyson joined his wife at tea.

By this time Dora was in a softer mood, and Ted was only too willing to follow her lead. He did not enjoy quarreling for its own sake.

Dora's power over him was uncanny. Whenever he did get the advantage of her he was either too slow or too tender-hearted to follow it up. She held him in the hollow of her hand.

As if they read each other's mind, each was thinking of the same thing about the time

THE BLUE AURA

the second cup of tea was dispatched. They thought of the afternoon when they had quarreled in this very room, and Dora was going to leave him.

Tyson drew the hassock close to her arm-chair, and seated himself, resting his head against her knees.

"Dora, I didn't mean it—about the girl who trod on the loaf being like you. I don't know what made me think of it."

"I did," said Dora, sweetly contrite. "I know I'm horrid sometimes. But I do love you, Ted."

He twisted about so that he could put his arms around her waist. He looked uncommonly handsome, to her way of thinking; but his eyes were too wistful—like the eyes of a patient ox.

"Dora—don't go away from me!"

"You silly dear!"

"I know you wouldn't really—only, don't pretend to, ever again. Why are you so sharp with me sometimes?"

"I don't know. I don't mean to be."

"Why do you flirt with other men?"

"I don't!"

"Perhaps it isn't flirting. It's the way you

THE BLUE AURA

look at them. You don't mean anything—but how do they know?"

"You are such a foolish dear," said Dora lazily.

She smoothed his hair as if he were five and she his mother.

"Suppose I made eyes at other girls?"

Dora laughed.

"Plenty make eyes at you. You get more love letters than I do. In Edinburgh you were simply swamped with 'em, and I only got two."

"I always did—in Edinburgh," Tyson replied simply. "Long before I met you. I never answered but one in my life."

"Who was that from?" Dora sat up straight, all of the lazy softness gone out of her. "You never told me."

"No, I never told you. I never told anybody—not even Turco."

"Ted!"

"Was it a crime?"

"Who was she? Did you meet her?"

"Aha, somebody else is jealous now!"

"Not a bit! I only want to know."

Dora relaxed, but haughtily.

"I did meet her. She was rather a nice

THE BLUE AURA

girl. She worked in a confectionery shop. She wanted to go on the halls. She could 'clog' a little."

"What was her name?"

"I've forgotten."

"Was she pretty?"

"No—and she wasn't young, either."

Dora felt relieved.

"What's happened to her?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I never saw her again."

"Was there never anybody else, Ted?"

Tyson flushed uncomfortably. He was no liar, but in one instance he had rather suppressed the truth. There had been someone else—the girl Turco had thrown out of the troupe so unceremoniously.

"What's the use of talking about such things?" he asked.

"I'm sure I don't want to know," Dora said indifferently, but there was a haunted look in her dark eyes.

Ted belonged to her. He loved nobody but her. And sometimes they were so cruel to each other! She hugged him fiercely and made him swear eternal allegiance all over again.

THE BLUE AURA

"And it *is* good to get home! London is beautiful even in the rain. But what shall we do to-night—Sunday! I want to go somewhere."

"Shall we go round to Turco's?"

"He didn't ask us. He'll be wanting to tell Dumpling how horrid I've been, and how glad he is to get away from us."

There were moments when Dora was fiercely jealous of Dumpling.

"Then I'll tell you what—let's have dinner at Chapin's," her husband suggested.

"Will you give me some champagne?"

"Why not?"

Dora clapped her hands. It would be a real celebration. They had always to be so careful of what they ate, and especially of what they drank; for excess would have spelled ruin to their work. It seemed to Dora that her husband and Turco were overcautious, and it always delighted her to lead them astray, for the sheer joy of doing something forbidden.

She made herself very fine that evening.

Tyson did not disapprove of the black dress with its bodice cut in deep points back and front—and no sleeves at all. If any-

THE BLUE AURA

thing, he would have described it as a quiet dress. Dora, however, gave it a restless quality. There was a jet butterfly poised on each thin shoulder, and she fastened a narrow scarlet ribbon about her throat, which from a short distance looked alarmingly like a gash. Her hair she left as it was, merely combing it out to stand a bit more wildly.

Chapin's, however, was used to such sights. Dora was not in the least out of place in that expensive but bohemian café.

How different it was from the other time she had gone to dine there, a famished little wretch cadging for food, and with the spirit nearly starved out of her.

Now she could order what she pleased, and, although a man would pay for her food and her champagne, that man was her adored and adoring husband. They were successful people. It almost compensated her for the trials of the recent tour.

Vaguely, she began to comprehend the significance of that tour, and of the many that must follow it. None but the successful were really entitled to champagne and kindred luxuries. It gave her pleasure to be spending in a brief hour of idleness what they

THE BLUE AURA

had earned literally by the sweat of their brows.

They were early, and the café was half empty, so they had a choice of tables. Dora chose a corner where she could sit with her back to the wall, on a crimson velvet settle. She ordered the most expensive dishes on the menu, beginning with caviar, which she had never tasted before and did not like when it came.

They were having soup when who should arrive but Turco, escorting Betty and Ivy. Turco had gone around to Mrs. Petrosini's, and so had the girls, who knew Dora would be back that afternoon. How lucky that Mrs. Petrosini knew where to send them!

So Turco was not tired of her society, after all. Dora felt flattered, and altogether happy at seeing her two old friends again.

As for Betty and Ivy, they had not changed much. They were rehearsing now for another revue, and Betty was just as frankly hungry as ever. They were both charmed at the sight of the food and sparkling wine.

Tyson ordered another bottle. Turco preferred beer, but was none the less gay for that. He wanted them all to come back to

THE BLUE AURA

Percy Street with him after dinner. In fact, he had gone around to fetch Dora at Dump-ling's request.

Dora nodded happily. She was so glad that Turco was not bored with her.

The three girls chattered like magpies—they had so much to tell each other. Betty had a sweetheart, a young man who worked in her uncle's drapery emporium in Highgate. He was earning three pounds a week, and her uncle thought well of him. When he got to four they might be married. At the moment he was suffering from a bad cold that kept him tied to the house; but as soon as he was better Dora must meet him.

Ivy surreptitiously gave Dora a grimace which told the latter she was not to expect anything wonderful of the young man. Ivy herself looked higher even than Highgate; but she had not found the right one yet.

"Why don't you marry Turco?" Dora suggested.

To her horror, Turco was annoyed. He took the suggestion seriously, and rejected Ivy on the spot.

Ivy, too, was annoyed. As she was sensitive about her height, and as Turco was a

THE BLUE AURA

little man, Dora's joke seemed pitilessly pointed.

For a few seconds there was a depressing lull in the conversation.

And then entered Lord Anthony Harland.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was no reason why Harland should not be in Chapin's that evening. Everybody goes to Chapin's if he has the price, or credit with the management.

There were several reasons why the young man should be alone, however. One of them, curiously enough, was remotely connected with Dora's mother and a letter intrusted to her care, which had miscarried. The letter should have been delivered to the daughter-in-law of Edith Trelawny's mistress. Instead of which it fell into other hands, and the consequences of this accident were to have far-reaching effects.

Suffice it for the moment, however, that Lord Anthony Harland was alone, and in a depressed frame of mind. He was all dressed up and had nowhere to go, and he hated above everything else to be alone, particularly in his present frame of mind.

Being what he was, he could do as his fancy dictated; and when he saw the acrobats and

THE BLUE AURA

their ballet-girl friends ringed around a big table dotted with gold-necked bottles, he elected to join them without waiting for an invitation.

He had to do something to relieve his great depression.

Dora welcomed him with snobbish pride. To her way of thinking, nothing could have happened more opportunely. Here was a chance to show off before Betty and Ivy.

Her welcome was enough. It did not matter to him in the least that Turco, though respectful, was not pressing, and that Tyson—the man who had knocked him out so boorishly—showed the cheerful face of Monday morning.

“You shall sit by me,” said Dora imperiously, patting the red velvet couch. “Change over, Ted.”

She was very anxious indeed that Betty and Ivy should know this great young man for her catch. They might admire him, but they must envy her, as always, as the one who had all the charm—the little queen bee, jealous of her power even when she had not the least desire to possess.

THE BLUE AURA

Under the table her foot came into contact with Harland's. She drew it away, but the touch had given her a thrill. She glanced at him sidewise out of her magnificent eyes. Quite unconsciously she was flirting again, and her husband saw it. Turco saw it, too, this time.

A queer look came into Turco's face. It was the look he had when he saw visions. He grew quite white.

Dora laughed to herself. Turco was jealous, too. She could make the whole world jealous if she liked.

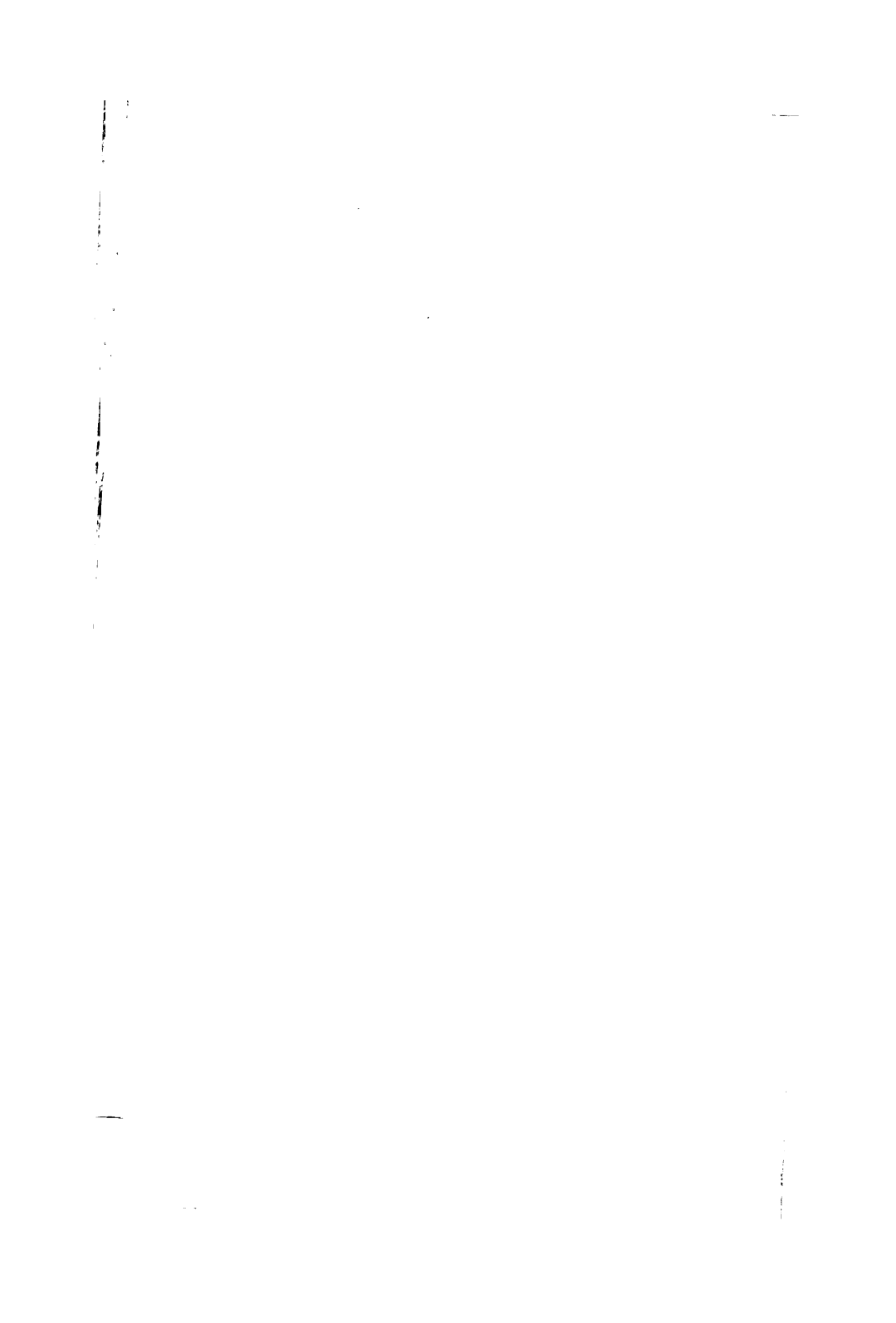
Betty and Ivy were frankly overawed and envious. They averted their faces, and talked in low tones to each other about their own humble affairs, sipping their wine with an exaggerated air of refinement.

Tyson had nothing whatever to say. Perhaps the poor boy felt that his doom lay not so much in Lord Anthony Harland as in Dora's fervid flying into the arms of flattery at every touch and turn. There was no trusting her. He turned from the sight with sick loathing in his heart.

Nor had Turco anything to say, until he broke into Dora's voluble flow of conversa-



"SMILINGLY DORA ALLOWED HARLAND TO ARRANGE HER CLOAK. 'YOU'LL COME TOO?' SHE SAID. 'WE'RE GOING TO TURCO'S.'"



THE BLUE AURA

tion to remind them that Dumpling was expecting them.

Smilingly Dora nodded, and allowed Harland to arrange her cloak.

"You'll come, too?" she said. "We're going back to Turco's."

"I'll come if I may drive you alone," he replied, his back to the others, so that they did not hear. "Your friends are very charming, but——"

He finished with an expressive smile. The monocle seemed to wink at her, and the ends of the little mustache twitched upward.

Dora appreciated the compliment, although it was not very subtle. She said "If you like" in a husky, hurried whisper, wondering how Ted would take such an arrangement, and if she really dared.

No one seconded her invitation, but to Harland it was apparently sufficient. There was a hansom on the rank, and, to everyone's surprise, he hailed it and bundled Dora in before they quite knew what he was about. Tyson, in fact, had gone back into the café to fetch a feather boa that Ivy had left behind. Perhaps it would have turned out differently had he been there.

THE BLUE AURA

The rain had ceased, but it was a cold, dark night—unpleasantly cold, oppressively dark. Dora felt very self-conscious all of a sudden. Before her marriage she had on several occasions been made aware of the fact that to drive alone in a cab with a man may spell an electric sort of intimacy.

Now, however, she was a married woman. That ought to make a difference. But, curiously enough, it didn't: the sense of intimacy was there.

She held herself rigidly and tried to cover her nervousness with light conversation—to cover her fears also; for she was wondering about Ted and how his anger would manifest itself.

She felt the pressure of Harland's arm on hers. He was not of her world, yet she felt a pressure that was more than physical. It was the bending of her will to his, the crushing down of her spirit of defiance.

Ted had been able to frighten her only when she was starved; but this stranger filled her with foreboding when she had nothing to ask for.

"So I am alone at last with beautiful Dora!" he exclaimed.

THE BLUE AURA

"Did you want to be—so much?" she replied, keeping up the banter, although her heart was throbbing painfully.

"More than anything else in the world," he replied. "Where've you been keeping yourself hidden so long?"

"We've been on tour."

"Oh, yes—you and the strong men. For heaven's sake, why do you do it? You ought to be starring—*ballerina asolata*—in Symonds' new revue. Fancy you being buried in the halls!"

"Buried! We're headliners," Dora said indignantly.

"I dare say. How much do you make—if I may ask?"

"They give me a third—that's because Turco's so generous. I get ten pounds a week."

"I fancy I could get you twenty-five if I spoke to Symonds. He's a good friend of mine."

"Symonds hated me," Dora observed, with an honesty that did her credit. "Even in the ballet, I wasn't much good."

"Only because you have too much temperament—and any clever dancer could make a

THE BLUE AURA

hit in one of those spectacular effects. You're clever—and beautiful. Shall I suggest it to Symonds?"

"I don't know. I'd have to ask my husband——"

"He'd object, of course."

"I'm afraid he would."

"Then there's no more to be said. But it's a great pity."

There was no more to be said just now, because Lord Anthony also was clever, and knew that when seed is sown a little time must elapse before it will sprout.

The hansom jogged on through the dark, deserted streets. The others must have reached Turco's long ago, for they would have gone in a taxicab.

Dora's uneasiness increased. Harland took her hand, and, though she left it quietly in his clasp, her heart pumped harder than ever.

Suddenly she wished she was not married. In full force the visions of her girlhood came back to her. In those visions the future always painted itself in vivid colors. She had felt her star of destiny to be a high one. Now her future was fulfilled—and it might have been so different if she had waited.

THE BLUE AURA

It was the vision and not the reality of Harland that made him suddenly seem so important.

"You're a dear little thing——" he whispered.

And then the hansom drew up with a jerk. They were in Percy Street.

Harland jumped out and almost lifted her down. To her great surprise and relief, he said he would not come in. He would see her again, perhaps soon. The promise was so vague that it did not alarm her.

He went off by himself in the hansom, and Dora hurried up the steps, concocting excuses, hoping against hope that Ted would accept them, or at least be amenable to coaxing.

CHAPTER IV.

IT seemed to be all dark at Turco's. The street door had been left open for her, and Dora slipped in, grateful for the fact that she was alone. It would be easier to deal with Ted without the handicap of Lord Anthony's presence.

She flew up the stairs, a guilty truant.

Turco was waiting for her at the top outside his flat. Rising up in the gloom, he gave her a start, and she screamed faintly.

"Oh, Turco, is that you? Whatever are you sitting here for? Where's Ted—and Betty and Ivy?"

"Are you alone?" Turco asked.

"Yes—Lord Anthony wouldn't come in. You weren't very cordial to him; I don't blame him."

"I didn't want him," said Turco.

"Oh, well!" Dora sniffed. "Are we going to stand out here in the hall all night?"

"Dumpling's gone to bed. The girls decided not to come, after all—and Ted

THE BLUE AURA

wouldn't, either. He left us outside Chapin's."

Dora's heart stood still for a second. Ted was angry with her, of course. She had known he would be.

"Then I had better go home," she said with dignity.

"I'll go with you," Turco offered.

"It isn't at all necessary."

"It may be."

Dora clutched at the little man's arm. Turco always terrified her when he was serious. It seemed unnatural for him to be anything but cheerful and funny.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I know Ted better than you do."

"Don't be absurd, Turco! Do you think Ted is going to beat me?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I'm afraid—of something else."

In her rage she shook him, and he seemed just like a limp, clumsy doll in her furious grasp.

"Tell me what you mean! Tell me at once!"

He would not tell her, however, and all the

THE BLUE AURA

way to New Compton Street she berated and implored him. They could not get a cab, and he insisted on accompanying her, whether she liked it or not.

"But what have I done, Turco?" she whimpered, broken at last against his rock-like refusal to tell her what it was that he feared.

"Don't ask me what you've done. I don't know. His lordship's no good to you, Dora, and Ted is jealous. He has reason to be."

"It's a lie!"

"It's the truth!"

"How dare you?"

"Because I feel—I know."

"Oh! Been seeing his aura, I suppose," she sniffed.

"Yes."

"You make me tired!"

Turco did not reply, and for a while she trotted along beside him in silence. The rain had stopped, but the pavements were still glistening. Their footsteps made a clatter in the empty streets. The bank of clouds overhead parted, and a wan, watery-looking moon peered down at them for a moment. On either side loomed the dark, forbidding tene-

THE BLUE AURA

ments of the poor, a light here and there at a window, a shadow creeping across a blind—all rather mysterious and furtive.

Dora drew her cloak more closely. She was cold and miserable and frightened, but Turco must not know. In his Sunday clothes, those strange, shapeless garments a size too large for him, he was a grotesque object—all the more so because he was so deadly serious.

"To-morrow we open at Chiswick, I suppose you know. There's a call for rehearsal at eleven," he reminded her.

That, it seemed to Dora, had nothing to do with the case.

"Of course I know," she replied. "It's nothing but work, work, work—and precious little in it for me, that I can see."

"Many a girl would thank God on her knees for all you have," Turco said.

"Huh! I could get twenty-five as easy as easy——"

She stopped short, and nipped her unruly tongue in self-punishment.

"Could you, now?" exclaimed Turco. "As easy as easy! With his lordship's help, eh? He's got a little money in Symonds' new show. Is that what you mean?"

THE BLUE AURA

"Never mind what I mean," said Dora.

They had reached Mrs. Petrosini's, and she let herself in with her latch-key.

"I'm coming up," Turco declared.

"I don't want you to."

"It isn't what *you* want."

Sullenly she allowed him to enter, and he hurried up the stairs ahead of her. Before she had reached the top he was back again.

"As I thought. He's not here. I shall have to look for him."

This time it was Turco who gripped Dora. He took her hard by the shoulders, his strong fingers biting through the flesh like steel springs.

"You're just like all women! Must have your little games. One of 'em tried it on once before, and I sent her packing. For two pins I'd send you!"

Never before had Dora seen Turco angry. It was a miracle that he could be angry with her. Her teeth chattered, and her face grew as white as chalk.

"You're hurting me. Let me go—you brute! What have I done? Where is Ted?"

He released her, muttering to himself. He was not the same Turco at all.

THE BLUE AURA

"Where're you going?"

"To find Ted—if I can."

Dora raced after him.

"I'm coming, too."

"Don't be a fool, Dora; you can't come."

"Yes, I can! He's my husband. You talk very big, Turco—but you don't scare me."

"I don't want to scare you, but——"

"Then don't try."

Out into the night they went once more. In Charing Cross Road they found a taxi.

Turco gave the driver an address, but Dora did not catch it, and he seemed deaf when she questioned him.

Hidden away in the byways of the great town were strange places—houses with darkened fronts and glittering interiors. It was the period of night clubs, reputable and otherwise.

Turco's knowledge of them all was peculiar. One might have taken him for an habitué; yet Dora knew that he was not. This sort of thing had happened before. She put one and one together and made two—herself and another woman.

Turco's outburst had not been against her personally. It simply meant that his patience

THE BLUE AURA

was sorely tried. He knew what he was up against, and he was thinking, not of Dora's fear and heartache, but of the rehearsal at Chiswick to-morrow morning.

They found her husband at last—in an unspeakable drinking hole tucked away in an alley off the Tottenham Court Road. Tyson was dead drunk. There is no milder term for it. Turco and another man lifted him into the cab, where he fell asleep at once with his head on Dora's shoulder. Nor did he know who she was, for he called her by another woman's name before he sank into slumber.

Dora had received two staggering surprises that night. Turco, displaying anger, furnished one. Her husband was the other, and the greater. She did not know how she could ever be friends with him again after such outrageous conduct. Her own conduct—the little thing that had inspired him to make a beast of himself—seemed lily pure by comparison.

They reached home at last, and Turco put his loutish, half-insensible partner to bed. Then he went off to get some sleep himself, leaving Dora alone with the horror.

THE BLUE AURA

She undressed in the sitting-room, and lay down on the couch, after bolting the door. Neither the door nor the bolt, however, could keep out Tyson's penetrating snores.

He snored all night, and Dora did not sleep a wink. In the early morning her fury against him culminated to such a point that she found herself wishing he were dead.

Turco arrived early the next morning. Dora let him in, and turned her face to the wall again with quivering lips. Her body was racked with fatigue and she had a splitting headache.

She listened dully while Turco went into the bedroom.

There were groans as he shook his partner back to consciousness; then a low murmur of voices.

Presently he returned, closing the door behind him.

"We can't go on to-day," he said grimly. "If we get the sack, it's your fault."

"Oh, yes, *my* fault! I suppose *I* got drunk."

"Much better for us if it had been you," Turco said gloomily. "We could have got along without you. Leave him alone—if you

THE BLUE AURA

can. There isn't anything to be done. I'll come around again later."

Dora buried her head in her arms. She felt miserable and utterly forlorn. That Turco should turn against her was the last straw. Turco—upon whom she would have counted above all other men!

And then she felt he was standing beside the couch where she lay huddled so unhappily.

"Dora—'t isn't in the heart of me to be so cruel unkind to you," he said gently. "I'm a great sinner myself. Who am I, to be scolding you?"

"Who, indeed!" exclaimed Dora, without turning to look at him.

"I'm only frightened for you, Dora, my dear. His lordship's turned your head, maybe. He isn't for the likes of you, Dora."

"I'm sure I don't want him. I don't care if I never see him again."

"You'll be kind to Ted when he comes to himself?"

"Not likely I'll speak to him."

"You'll only make matters worse if you don't. Dora, forgive me for being so cross last night. I was worried. This means our bread and butter—yours as well as mine, and

THE BLUE AURA

Dumpling's, too. I'm getting old for the business. If I can't depend on my partner, where am I?"

"Why preach at me?" Dora asked wonderingly, letting him see her face at last. It was a ravaged little face, still chalk-white, with dark circles under the eyes.

"I'm only telling you," said Turco lamely.

He took his departure without saying anything more. He went hurriedly, as if the sight of her was too much to bear.

CHAPTER V.

EVER afterward Dora looked back upon that day as one of unmitigated horror.

What tenderness she had in her nature was swallowed up by angry pride. It was not so much that Ted had made a beast of himself and they were likely to get into the all-powerful music-hall manager's bad graces because of it. Her psychology was such that she could not be entirely annoyed at having driven a man to drink. It was a sordid compliment to her powers of fascination.

The rub lay in the fact that it was not an isolated case; that, in spite of his assertion that he had never been in love before, some other woman—women, perhaps—had also driven him to drink. Turco knew what was to happen and where to look for him.

What depths of duplicity!

And now Turco wanted her to be kind to the brute. Turco, counting this day out, was thinking only of to-morrow. He thought

THE BLUE AURA

nothing of Dora's pride and personal anguish.

This, however, was not all of the horror that the day could hold. Things have a way of happening in bunches.

By eleven o'clock Turco was back again, having made what arrangements with the management he could. He had to tell them the truth, for a doctor's certificate was out of the question; and it was due entirely to his own high reputation that their act was not canceled for the entire week.

Turco came bearing mysterious bottles and a small parcel from the chemist's. With his antidotes he disappeared into the bedroom.

Dora was studiously deaf to what might be going on in there. She made herself tidy in a half-hearted way and set the room to rights.

Mrs. Petrosini, under the mistaken notion that Tyson was seriously ill, brought up a bunch of mimosa. She wondered why the doctor had not been summoned.

Then the front-door bell rang, and when she had answered it a visitor was shown up.

The visitor was about as welcome as a surprise party to a victim of acute toothache.

It was Dora's mother.

THE BLUE AURA

Edith Trelawny came in, carrying a small handbag and a neatly furled umbrella. She looked as trim and severe as usual in her dark serge costume and round hat with its modest wing trimming. There was a spot of color on each cheek bone, and behind her nose glasses her hard eyes had a feverish glitter.

Apparently she was disturbed and angry, but held herself well in control.

"I was wondering if you could put me up for a day or two," she said, without the preface of greeting.

"Put you up?" Dora echoed.

She was dismayed. Her own domestic crisis loomed so large that she could scarcely think of anything else.

"Only until I get a new berth," Edith replied.

"But——"

"I've left Mrs. Darrell. Snuffy old woman she was, too. I couldn't stand her another minute. We had words yesterday, and I simply popped off. Not for worlds would I go back there."

Dora glanced anxiously toward the door of the bedroom. The ways of mistresses and their maids were as Greek to her. That her

THE BLUE AURA

mother could "pop off" on the spur of the moment was remarkable only because it was a personal inconvenience to herself.

Edith sat down and began to take off her gloves. She regarded the matter as settled.

"Who's in there?" she asked, nodding toward the door.

"My husband—and Turco. Ted's ill. Turco is looking after him."

"What's the matter with him?" Edith asked indifferently.

"He got drunk last night," Dora replied with brutal exactitude.

"Oh! Does he do that often?"

"Never before."

"You don't look any too well yourself," Dora's mother said critically, noticing for the first time.

"I couldn't sleep."

"Aren't you working?"

"We were to have—but Ted's upset it for to-day. I don't know what to do about you. Perhaps Mrs. Petrosini could let you have a room."

"I can sleep anywhere," said Edith. "I haven't made up my mind what to do—whether to advertise or go to an agency."

THE BLUE AURA

Leaving as I did, of course I couldn't ask her for a reference."

At this point in their conversation Turco emerged from the bedroom.

"Oh, how do you do!" he exclaimed, his worried-looking monkey's eyes questioning Dora's.

"My mother is staying here for a few days," the girl said in explanation.

"Until I get a new situation," Edith amplified.

"Oh, I see," said Turco.

He was at a loss. There was something he wanted to say privately to Dora. He hoped to effect a reconciliation between her and her husband, for the moment seemed ripe for it.

Edith Trelawny came to his aid quite unconsciously.

"Well, Dora, I have to go out for a little while. I shall be back for tea. My bag will be safe enough here, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Au revoir, then. And to you, Mr. Turco. I hope my son-in-law will be feeling better presently."

"Yes, ma'am; thank you kindly," said

THE BLUE AURA

Turco, blinking in his curious animal-like way.

Edith Trelawny, in her neat, lady-like attire, holding firmly to the furled umbrella and wearing her eyeglasses with an academic air, sallied forth from New Compton Street. Opposite the Palace Theater she boarded an omnibus that would take her to Victoria. She knew where she was going—no need to consult a directory. The address was quite familiar to her, although she had never visited it in person.

During the fairly long drive she sat bolt upright, clutching the handle of her umbrella as if it were a weapon in disguise that she might need at any moment. The eyeglasses, however, were protection enough. Behind them she was twice shielded. Only a very brave man would have attempted flirtation with those eyeglasses.

At the corner by Grosvenor Gardens she alighted, walked a block, and turned into a side street where the houses were smaller. Some of them had been made into shops of a semi-elegant nature. Here was a modiste rejoicing in the Christian name of Alphonsine; over the way, a florist's window banked with

THE BLUE AURA

flowers caught a stray gleam from the reluctant sun. At the corner was an antique shop, fascinating with its generous collection of Victorian trash among which one might possibly discover a Georgian treasure.

Edith found the house she wanted. It was quite the nicest in the genteel street, but from the look of it one would not suspect its owner of possessing immoderate means.

A middle-aged manservant answered her ring.

"I don't suppose his lordship is in," Edith said crisply, "but I have important business with him and would like to make an appointment. My name is Miss Trelawny. If you will be good enough——"

"His lordship has just come in," the servant interrupted. "As a matter of fact, his lordship is expecting you, miss. Will you step this way?"

Edith nodded and entered. She did not know she was expected, but it was not surprising—in view of what had happened.

Inside it was a charming little house, but somewhat crowded. The walls of the narrow corridor were overburdened with the heavy

THE BLUE AURA

portraits of ancestors. A huge chest almost blocked the way.

Edith was shown into a study littered with books and bibelots, overlooking a soot-stained, handkerchief-sized garden.

"Really!" she exclaimed to herself, thinking of the commodious country house from which circumstances had ejected her—and that incidentally, for the same reason, would no longer receive Lord Anthony Harland.

He did not keep her waiting. She had time for one survey of the room, and he was there, twitching mustache, monocle, and all, demanding explanations.

"For heaven's sake, Trelawny, tell me how it happened!" he cried. "Two years I trusted you—we trusted you—and you never made a slip——"

"Nearer three years, my lord."

"Yes, I dare say. Seems more like ten to me. I had only the wire from you. She—Mrs. Darrell—hasn't written."

"No, my lord. It was like this."

"Yes, yes; tell me!"

"Young Mr. Darrell came into her bedroom as I was doing madam's frock. I'd just given madam the letter as had come by the

THE BLUE AURA

evening post, addressed to me, as per usual."

"Yes!"

"Madam was reading it. Her husband came in quite softly. Neither of us heard him, my lord. I was that startled I could have dropped. He snatched it out of her hand, envelope and all—and of course the envelope had my name on it. I flew out of the room, because I knew there'd be a scene. I saw it in his face. Then I got the wire off to you."

"Yes. That was thoughtful of you, Trelawny."

"Thank you, my lord."

"What then?"

Edith shrugged her shoulders.

"After dinner—which I got it from Mr. Burge nobody ate—old madam had me on the carpet. She didn't say much. It isn't her way to waste words. But what she did say——"

"Was to the point, eh?"

"As your lordship puts it."

"You're sacked—booted?"

"Yes, my lord."

"No references?"

THE BLUE AURA

"Not from old Mrs. Darrell, my lord. She could scarcely give me a reference—could she?"

"I'm very sorry, Trelawny. Of course, in a way, it's my fault. Will you accept a fiver?"

Her fingers closed over the banknote with businesslike promptitude.

"Thank you, I'm sure, my lord; but——"

"But you can't live on five pounds forever. I know that. Look here, what do you say to a sort of theatrical engagement—dresser in a theater?"

Edith shrugged her shoulders again.

"What's it worth?" she asked.

"Fifteen bob a week—*and* tips. I haven't a notion what the tips amount to."

"What sort of persons?"

"Semi-principals—young ladies with a few lines, or a song or dance. Not more than four or five."

"It wouldn't be permanent, then?"

"You might take it while you're looking for something permanent. Hang it all, Trelawny, we're both in the same boat, in a manner of speaking. You've been jolly well paid.

THE BLUE AURA

You accepted the risk. Now that the game is up——”

“Ah, yes, my lord! I wasn’t complaining. You’re very kind indeed! I’d be grateful for the situation you mention. When do I begin?”

Harland sat down at a crowded little desk and began to scribble hastily on a letter pad. At intervals he spoke:

“This day week. To-day’s Monday, isn’t it? Heavens, I thought it was next month! . . . I’ll tell Harding to expect you. He’s the stage manager. Give him this. . . . Next Monday at ten o’clock. They’ll be rehearsing . . . Ward will tell you what to do . . . It’s the Auditorium Theater, in Shaftesbury Avenue.”

“Thank you, my lord; you’re very kind.”

She slipped the letter into her bag, Harland rang a bell, and the manservant came to show her out.

CHAPTER VI.

NORA, meanwhile, was being asked to forgive her husband.

At Turco's instigation, he came shakily into the sitting-room. The bout with alcohol had altered his appearance in a becoming way. He was wan and white, and looked a suffering but interesting creature.

Turco had pulled him together amazingly well. There was nothing about him to shock the sensitive soul of Dora, except what she remembered.

He had been a beast, and now he seemed to be a chastened angel, passed through purgatory to contrite peace.

Of course he had put himself hopelessly in the wrong. Getting intoxicated, and thus jeopardizing the professional engagements of all three of them, was a much more heinous offense than the one that Dora had committed, and he did not attempt to defend himself. He only hoped she would forgive him, as

THE BLUE AURA

Turco had done, and say no more about it. It was almost too much to hope for.

The expression of Dora's mouth was not pretty, although she said she forgave him. She said that because she wanted Turco to go and leave her alone with her prey. After she had freed her mind of a few things it would be easier to make the forgiveness complete.

Turco took the hint. His partner was not sociably inclined, and Dora was almost hostile. So Turco went.

Scarcely had the door closed on him when Dora asked coldly:

"Who is 'Molly'?"

Tyson's nerves were not very steady. He jumped as if someone had set off a squib under his chair.

"W-why—" he stammered, "I don't know what you mean. Who's been yarning to you?"

"*Who is 'Molly'?*" Dora repeated, more coldly and very firmly.

"How the devil should *I* know!" he exclaimed, forgetting that he prided himself on truth and candor.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora gritted her teeth and smiled at him ferociously.

"You seemed to know last night when you put your head on my shoulder in the cab. You thought *I* was Molly."

"I don't remember anything about it," Tyson stated emphatically; and doubtless he was truthful enough in saying that.

"Was she the woman Turco threw out of the troupe?"

"Oh, Turco's put you up to this!"

"He didn't mean to—it was when we were so worried, looking for you. He seemed to know just where to look. He said it was my fault you were such a fool. He said it had happened before—over another woman."

Tyson groaned a little and held his head.

"I can't help it if it did," he replied.

There was no getting out of traps when Dora laid them.

"Then you lied to me—you who always tell the truth!" she sneered.

"How have I lied?" He was frankly puzzled.

"You said you'd never been in love before you met me. You said that I was the first——"

THE BLUE AURA

"Oh, Lord, what a fellow tells a girl when he's courting her has to be thrown up at me! I haven't passed *all* my life in jail."

"You admit, then, that there have been other women in your life?"

Dora's heart had grown quite hard by this time.

"I'll admit that there'll never be another," Tyson said. "Sometimes even one is too much, when she has a tongue like yours. Sharpen it on somebody else. I'm sick of being ground."

"Oh!"

"Always picking on me! Can't you see how rotten I feel? Can't you leave me alone for a minute? I'm going back to bed."

Dora said nothing. In silence she allowed him to seek once more the sanctuary his nerves demanded.

Presently, however, she followed him in, but not to notice him. He lay on the disordered bed, half dressed, pretending to be asleep, but really watching her.

Dora was going out. She took down her checked skirt and smart little fur coat, and hunted out the best of her blouses. On her

THE BLUE AURA

head she put a round fur cap that matched the collar and cuffs of her coat.

Watching her slyly, Tyson was reminded of that time when she said she was going to leave him; but at the moment, somehow, he could get neither excited nor apprehensive at the idea that perhaps she was leaving him now.

For one thing, he felt in his bones that she wasn't; and for another he half hoped she would—temporarily at least.

To Dora it was almost incredible that he did not question her, for she knew that he was not asleep.

Her heart grew harder and harder.

He—the perfect man—had lied to her. He, who professed never to have had a sweetheart before her, had made a fool of himself many times over other women.

This man dared to scold her for flirting! She gave him the harsh name of libertine, and vowed a cruel vengeance on him—to herself, however. It would not do to tell him that she could be wicked, too. He might try to stop her.

But when she sallied forth there was nothing definite in her mind. She had a fairly

THE BLUE AURA

full purse, and some of her wickedness blew itself off in the neighborhood of Oxford and Regent streets. There were many things for which she had been saving to buy, and this afternoon she bought most of them, caution flung to the winds.

At tea-time, in a shop in the neighborhood, she remembered her vow of vengeance, and pondered on it while consuming the meal—which she made a heavy one, having missed lunch.

It was then that the idea of wickedness took on the definite personality of Lord Anthony Harland.

Discovering his address and telephone number was a simple matter. By this time it was nearly six o'clock, and she decided to ring him up. She had a good enough excuse.

Over the wire his voice replied, sharply eager:

“Hello. Is that—is that you?”

For a second she thought perhaps he took her for someone else.

“It's Mrs. Tyson,” she replied.

“Oh! How jolly! I thought it was you,” he said.

THE BLUE AURA

Yet there was the least lingering note of disappointment in his voice.

Dora's conceit, however, kept her from noticing it.

"I wanted to ask you—that is, if you aren't busy—I thought perhaps you might tell me a little more about that engagement you mentioned last evening," she said.

"Nothing would please me better," he replied with absent-minded heartiness. "What are you doing now?"

"I've just had my tea. I'm telephoning from the post office in Regent Street."

"Then why don't you jump into a taxi and come around here? I'm not dining until late, and I've got to hang about a bit for a message; otherwise——"

It was daring enough. If Ted knew, he would be sorry there had ever been a Molly on his list of lady friends.

"Very well; I'll come at once," Dora said—and added under her breath: "And that's one for you!" meaning her husband.

The taxi bowled her along speedily over the route that her mother had taken earlier in the day by a slower and less expensive vehicle.

THE BLUE AURA

The same servant who had admitted Edith Trelawny now ushered in Dora.

Harland was in the little study. He seemed excited, stirred out of his usual cool facetiousness, and greeted Dora expansively. She thought she was the cause of it, and to a certain extent perhaps she was.

"Well, and did the strong man scold you last night?" he asked.

She laughed into his eyes.

"He did worse than that. We've had an awful time. He—Ted—drank too much. He was so bad we couldn't go on to-day. Turco was furious."

"Oh! Why did he do that?"

"Because he wanted to, I suppose," she answered, a hoarse little note of anger in her voice.

"And so you thought you'd change your mind?"

"Well, twenty-five quid a week is a lot of money."

"So it is! I wish I could earn that much."

She looked at him, surprised.

"You were only joking, then—about my earning it?"

"Not in the least. My parents didn't

THE BLUE AURA

raise me to be a ballet dancer, unfortunately. Spending money is more in my line than earning it, and if the time comes when there's no more to spend, then I shall be inclined to envy people like you."

"Are you going broke?" Dora asked with innocent wonder.

"Often," Harland replied enigmatically. "Oh, excuse me a moment, will you? There's the telephone."

The bell had started ringing imperiously, and he bolted for the hall.

The telephone was just outside, and Dora could hear every word he said, for in his hurry he did not quite close the door.

"Hello! Is that you?"

Precisely what he had said to her! Dora's nose went up disgustedly. The world seemed full of other women.

"Yes, I got your wire. Well? . . . You don't know what he's going to do? . . . Let him try it—two can play at that game. . . . Yes, Trelawny was here this morning. She's a pretty fool, if you like! . . . Oh, I dare say it wasn't wholly her fault. She can't ask Mrs. Darrell for a reference and—what's that? . . . Don't worry.

THE BLUE AURA

I'm getting her fixed up with something, and she'll hold her tongue right enough. . . . I say, when am I to see you? . . . But you *must*. I can't—oh, hang it all, if you're going to talk like that! . . . No, don't go away yet. . . . Yes, I understand. Very well, have it your own way."

The receiver was banged up disgustedly, and Harland came back into the room, to find Dora staring toward the door, white-faced and open-mouthed.

He was too excited to note the state of shocked surprise she was in.

He ran his hands through his hair, then smoothed it down again.

"Well, well, well!" he exclaimed. "Hang the whole world! Excuse me, beautiful Dora, I must seem a bit wild, but——"

Trelawny—Mrs. Darrell? What did it mean? The connection was fairly clear in Dora's mind. Evidently her mother knew Lord Anthony Harland—had been to see him. What on earth did it mean? Did Lord Anthony know that Trelawny was her mother?

She smiled feebly.

THE BLUE AURA

"You've got something on your mind," she ventured.

"Yes—and it's heavier than my hair," he replied. "But it's nothing to do with you—so why should you worry?"

Nothing to do with her? Then he did not know that Mrs. Darrell's Trelawny was her mother. Edith could keep her own counsel.

"Would you care to tell me about it?" she asked cautiously. "I mean, could I help you in any way?"

He stared at her for a second as if he thought she was being impertinent; but suddenly his face cleared.

"Why not? There's nothing at all to tell you, but perhaps you could help me. I've taken a great fancy to you, Dora. I could—almost love you."

This sort of talk was interesting.

"Don't try, if it hurts you," she said, with her widest, fiercest smile.

"The difficulty would be not to love you."

He pulled up a chair close to hers, and she shrank back just a little. The sense of intimacy was come upon her again. The whole room seemed charged with it.

THE BLUE AURA

"Dora," he said solemnly, "Do you know what one pays for love?"

Dora tossed her head.

"It never cost me anything," she said proudly.

"Ah! Then you've never loved. One pays one's whole life. One gives—but never gets."

"Some girl's turned you down hard," Dora observed.

The little mustache twisted to a whimsical angle, and Harland carefully readjusted his monocle.

"I always said you were clever! Yes, you are clever, beautiful Dora. Let me look at you. What magnificent eyes you've got! Shall I kiss you—I wonder?"

"You can wonder," said Dora, pushing back her chair and getting to her feet. Revenge had gone far enough for one occasion.

"I won't kiss you if you don't want me to."

"I bet you won't!" she flared back.

Until she said that he had not really wished to kiss her. Now he did. She was making him forget; she was a delicious little antidote for the carking care he suffered.

"Wait. You're not going?"

"I have to get back," said Dora.

THE BLUE AURA

"But we've discussed nothing. Will you go to see Symonds? Tell him I sent you. Go at once; there isn't any time to waste, you know. I'll arrange it. I've put about the last of my cash into that blessed show of his, and I can have some say about it."

"You're very kind, but I must be going now."

As he made no move, she ventured to pass him. He caught one of her wrists.

"I'm mad to-night—mad!" he whispered, towering above her.

The strangeness of him sent an answering thrill through her veins. Was it true that she had never loved? Hadn't she really loved Ted? She was too ignorant to distrust emotion. This wild thrill must mean love.

His arm encircled her shoulders and she felt his breath warm on her cheek. The little mustache grazed her lips. The kiss was no more than a tantalizing touch.

She broke away with a sharp cry, and got out of the house before he could stop her. When she was in the street she ran as if all the fiends of hell were at her heels.

Revenge? It had proved a boomerang in her unskillful hands.

CHAPTER VII.

DORA did not go to see Symonds about the engagement. There were several reasons. The most important was that her mother was being taken on as a dresser in the very same theater. Betty and Ivy knew that Edith Trelawny was Dora's mother; they had met her at the wedding.

They told the other girls. There was quite a sensation in the ballet, and Betty and Ivy were no longer Dora's friends—not because her mother was on a lower social level than the imaginative girl had pretended, but because they were annoyed at having been hoaxed.

Betty and Ivy also whispered scandal about Dora. They said she had lost her head over a young nobleman, and he had been induced to give her mother a job on the strength of Dora's influence. Fortunately they did not know about the job that had been offered Dora.

But there was another and a better reason

THE BLUE AURA

why she did not go to Symonds. Turco would not let her.

In his uncanny way, he saw how matters stood. He did not know of her foolish visit to Harland, but he did know that something was the matter. He was able to play upon her sympathy, too; for Dumpling was ill. He begged Dora to help him look after the poor child, and she had not the heart to refuse.

Dumpling's illness helped her to keep up a pose of aloofness from her husband.

That weary week they played Chiswick, and the show went very badly. Tyson's lapse from sobriety left him shaky, and Turco's limbs, if not his life, were in constant danger.

The three were at odds with one another. Dora was in a perpetual state of sulks, and would scarcely be civil to her husband. Turco, trying to make peace between them, came in for more than a fair share of their mutual rancor.

Tyson was contrite and resentful by turns. Was Dora going to treat him like this forever? He had pledged his word of honor to Turco to run straight, and he kept it; but he was so miserable that it was hard work.

THE BLUE AURA

Turco went to and from London between the afternoon and evening performances to see how Dumpling was getting on.

Dora remained in her dressing-room at the theater and took a nap each day, so that she could relieve Mrs. Smith and Turco of some of the night nursing. Sometimes Tyson went with Turco; sometimes he wandered about Chiswick by himself, trying to puzzle out why his world had suddenly turned upside down.

Of them all, however, Dora was the most miserable. She had convinced herself that she must, indeed, be in love with Lord Anthony Harland. She received a letter from him full of tender reproaches, asking when he was to see her; but she had no time in which to answer it.

One night, after they had got back from Chiswick, he came to Turco's; but she was with Dumpling and did not know he was there until afterward.

She meant to make some sort of a rendezvous with him as soon as she had a moment to herself. But before that time came something happened.

It was Saturday night—the end of Chiswick, thank goodness! The following Mon-

THE BLUE AURA

day they opened at the Viaduct Empire, an eight-penny taxicab fare from New Compton Street, and there was no call for rehearsal and only two matinées a week. Dora felt she could almost faint with relief.

Poor little grizzled Turco was on the verge of collapse. He fell asleep in the train, with his head dropped forward and his toes pointing in like a child's.

"I suppose you'll be going along to Turco's to-night as usual?" Ted asked in a whisper, hoping that she would not.

"Yes," said Dora, dashing his hope.

"The old chap's tired, isn't he?" Ted did so long to be friendly once more.

"I shall feel sorry for him if——" She stopped, afraid to say what was in her mind.

Her husband took her hand, while Turco, asleep on the seat facing them, bobbed uncomfortably to the motion of the train.

"May I come along and sit up part of the night for you?" Ted asked.

Perhaps she was in a gentler mood. After all, he was her husband. She could not keep him at arm's length forever unless—she left him forever.

THE BLUE AURA

"Come if you like," she said indifferently.

So they both went back to Turco's that night.

Mrs. Smith had left some food on the table in the practice room, as she always did. It was close upon midnight when they arrived, and Dumpling was asleep.

Turco went in to look at her. When he joined them at the scratchy supper of bread, cheese and beer, his monkey's face had an unpleasantly ashen hue.

"Is she worse?" asked Dora.

He shook his head.

"She's sleeping quite peacefully."

"Then do eat something, Turco, that's a good fellow. You look worn out."

But Turco could not or would not eat.

"Thank God for Sunday," he said reverently.

They were surprised—not so much by the remark as the way he said it. Dora felt uncomfortable.

Turco was afraid Dumpling would die, and he had lived only for the poor little cripple these last twelve years. Dora knew now why he had saved his money. He wanted to make sure that Dumpling would be comfortable

THE BLUE AURA

when he was gone. And now it seemed as if his hoard would not be needed.

Tyson, less sensitive, as clumsy and foolish as he was stalwart and handsome, felt also the uncertainty of the future. If he could only please Dora and be sure that she still cared for him!

Dora's uncertainty was peculiar to her disordered temperament. She did not know what she wanted. Mad visions tempted her. Life was so prosaic. She felt that it should be a gala thing.

After supper she tiptoed down to Dumping's room and put on the bright flowered kimono she kept there. She would waken Ted about three, and he would then take her place.

A screen sheltered the night light from the bed, but the curtains were drawn back, and the moon—at the full—threw its beams into the room, filling it with a pale, shimmering radiance.

Dora's usual plan was to sit down behind the screen in the comfortable chair placed for her, and to think with knotted forehead until she, too, fell asleep, or until Dumping stirred and asked for something. The sick girl did

THE BLUE AURA

not move or talk much. Some nights she did not seem even to know that Dora was there.

Dora did not take up her usual position in the chair to-night. She was restless, and the moon-mist gave her a ghostly feeling. The warmly yellow little night light made a cheery patch. It was something real in the midst of unreality.

Dora felt herself to be unreal. She could make her arm hurt by pinching it, but it was foolish to stand there pinching her arm forever, just to make sure that she was a living, breathing creature.

She approached the bed softly.

Dumpling's hair had fallen over the bulging, unnatural brow. She looked almost pretty, but as if made of wax. Dora gazed in awe at the remarkably beautiful hands relaxed on the coverlet.

The flat little bosom rose and fell automatically. It reminded the watcher of a figure she had once seen at Madame Tussaud's—a wax figure made to breathe by winding up a wire spring.

She felt suddenly afraid. Then Dumpling stirred, opened wide her lovely, sad eyes, and smiled.

THE BLUE AURA

"Oh, Dora! I was dreaming of you. I dreamed it was the night of my party and you were dancing in your Columbine dress. And I dreamed of Lord Anthony Harland, too. He was kissing you, Dora, and Ted was mad with grief. And Turco killed him—Lord Anthony. I was glad Turco killed him, for he shouldn't have kissed you, Dora. He isn't your husband."

Dora winced and backed away from the bed.

"What a silly dream, Dumpling! Is there anything you want, dear? Shall I give you your milk?"

"No, thank you; I'm not thirsty. I'm feeling ever so much better. But there is something I want. I wish you would dance for me, Dora, like you did the night of the party—on your toes, twirling so beautifully. If you'd put another pillow under my head I could see quite nicely."

Dora arranged the extra pillow. Her hands were cold and shaking. It was impossible to refuse Dumpling's request, but what the child had said affected her profoundly.

Why should Dumpling dream that Harland had kissed her? Was the rest of the

THE BLUE AURA

dream prophetic because the first of it had already come true?

"Now, Dora, dance, please. Move the screen so I can see better."

Dora moved the screen. The little light gleamed in the moon-mist with a hundred glowworm power.

She took off her kimono and slipped on the pair of ballet slippers that Dumpling had kept as a memento of the great evening.

With her hair sticking out like a black aureole, her neck and arms bare, her short silk petticoat swishing softly, Dora danced in the strangely radiated light.

Her shadow danced with her against the walls like a giant hobgoblin.

"Oh, Dora, how lovely you are!" sighed Dumpling. "If I could only have been like you! If I could only have danced—if I could have walked, even! Do it on one toe, Dora, with the other pointed up."

Dora obediently pointed ten minutes to twelve, then let herself down gracefully, the minute foot, as it were, swung backward's and out, as if she were about to fly, her arms spread like a Christmas-tree fairy's.

"I am so happy!" Dumpling exclaimed



"'I AM SO HAPPY!' DUMPLING EXCLAIMED ECSTATICALLY. 'I FEEL THAT I AM DANCING TOO.' SHE TRIED TO RAISE HERSELF, AND HELD OUT HER ARMS, BUT FELL BACK."



THE BLUE AURA

ecstatically. "I feel that I am dancing, too."

She tried to raise herself, and held out her arms, but fell back.

Dora ran and bent over her. She was very still. The little flat bosom did not move any more, and the waxen eyelids had drooped. But the lips were held curved in that smile of rapturous pleasure.

Dora dashed madly into the corridor.

"Turco!" she called in a penetrating whisper.

He would be asleep; he would not hear her. The house was unearthly still.

But he heard and came immediately, pattering along in his old dressing gown and carpet slippers.

"Oh, Turco!"

He slipped past her into the room. She saw him kneeling by Dumpling's little bed, his face against the mattress, his long fingers plucking sorrowfully at the coverlet.

Dora rushed up to the great, dim practice room. Her husband was asleep on the boxing pad.

"Wake up, wake up!" she called in his ear, as she shook him roughly. "Dumpling's dead."

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER that Dora had to be very gentle indeed, on Turco's account. She had to be gentle to Ted, too, because if she wasn't that seemed to hurt Turco.

He was like a wounded animal in his suffering. The monkey's eyes seemed to reproach the whole world for the pain that had been inflicted on him.

Yet he said so little. One did not know how to comfort him. Dora was sad on her own account, and wept for poor little Dump-ling; and, curiously, that seemed almost to please Turco. He asked her if she would wear mourning, and when she told him she would that really pleased him.

He himself had a black band sewed on to the sleeve of his overcoat, and bought a black bowler and two black neckties, as well as some black-bordered handkerchiefs.

Arrayed in these things, he looked a grim little figure of fun; but, fortunately, he was too absorbed in his grief to know it.

THE BLUE AURA

On Saturday night Dumpling died. Monday afternoon the four of them, including Mrs. Smith, all crowded into one carriage, followed the hearse to the cemetery and saw the little coffin lowered into its grave.

Then they were trotted back at a smart pace, and it was over.

All that Turco had lived for was gone. For twelve years Dumpling had filled his life. Now, no more the long letters to be written and absurd little gifts to be bought when they were on tour. The saint had left the sanctuary, and Turco had no home.

Nothing would induce him to go back to Percy Street, he said. As a matter of fact, no one tried, except Mrs. Smith. She went off to her own lair, wherever it was, when Turco would not be coaxed, and Turco went to Mrs. Petrosini's with the Tysons.

They had a sad pretense of a meal together, and then set forth for the Viaduct Empire, where they were billed as headliners.

Turco, in his grinning make-up and absurd costume, defaced the outside of the music hall in five-foot colored posters. Ted, more decorously clad, holding a dark-haired Columbine

THE BLUE AURA

by the hand, was less conspicuous. Turco was the famous member of the troupe.

As he pattered along in the wake of his partners, up the long alley and past the lengthening gallery queue, he was anything but the ribald object the posters made him out to be.

"Good evening, Mr. La Turcque," said the doorkeeper, eying his mourning badges respectfully. "I'm sorry to hear there's been a death in your family."

He had got the news from Ted, to whom had fallen the duty of shifting the properties that morning.

"Thank you, Mr. Watson," said Turco. "I hope we're not late."

"Nothing to speak of, sir. It doesn't matter to-night."

Everybody was kind to Turco. He was popular with his fellow players, that strange vagabond crew that meets for a week here or there, and forms its elastic friendships, the bonds of which may easily be stretched to Australia two years hence, or only as far as Walham Green Monday week.

Tyson was always dressed first, since his

THE BLUE AURA

costume was simple and he had no elaborate make-up.

When Dora came down her husband was standing in the wings, chatting with a tall, blonde girl in white buckskin tights and a blue military cap and cape. The tall girl had a drum hung by a strap over her shoulder and was twirling the sticks in her bejeweled fingers.

Quite casually, Dora stopped and glanced over a copy of the week's bill that hung in a wooden frame on the door leading to the corridor.

Her eye ran down it, and stopped at Number Four:

MISS MOLLY BRIAN,
The Drum and Clog Queen,
in

Songs and Dances from her Repertoire, including "Major Billy," "Guess You'll Have to Do It," "The Daft Drummer," etc.

It would be difficult to find two more dissimilar types than Miss Molly Brian and Miss Dora Trelawny. Miss Brian was everything that Miss Trelawny was not—and she

THE BLUE AURA

was much more of everything, including flesh, height, hair, and complexion.

For that reason, as well as for the fact that her name was Molly, Dora hated her on sight.

She stood aside, watching Ted and Miss Brian, until, forlorn and unhappy, Turco appeared. She would know when she saw Turco whether or not her suspicions were correct.

Turco cast his eyes about, and became aware of the chatting couple. It was difficult to read any expression in his face. The one painted on it was a veritable mask—and a good thing, too, that night, for the wretched little man needed every mechanical aid to clowning that he could get.

But from his attitude Dora knew that he not only recognized Miss Brian, but had a small opinion of her. Tyson himself looked none too comfortable when he saw his partner, while the Drum and Clog Queen gave Turco one withering glance and turned her back on him.

This, then, was Molly, the unknown *bête noir* who had driven Dora to a frenzy, first of jealousy, and then of a determination to be wicked.

THE BLUE AURA

Dora's blood hummed in her ears. She was glad to observe that Miss Brian had a fairly insignificant place on the program; glad to see that Turco did not like her; glad because she was so big and blonde, and villainously made up like a scarlet sunset.

Miss Brian had finished her turn, yet she lingered and seemed determined to chat with Ted. She ambled after him from one corner of the wings to another, while he was obviously anxious to be rid of her.

It was the acrobats' turn finally. Turco, with the memory of Dumping a cruel heart-ache, braced himself for his silly grin and cyclonic entrance. He came on to interrupt the graceful dance and gymnastic postures of the other two.

Dora also had to smile. She and Ted opened the scene together. They swung on, hand in hand.

Her face was a mask, but a mobile one. She gave him a smile like forked lightning, and said with a hiss between her set teeth:

"*So that's Molly—eh?*"

"Oh, shut up!" he answered *sotto voce*, giving the audience the smirk that was expected of him.

THE BLUE AURA

"I admire your taste!" said Dora, as she stood on one toe and surprised him with the usual feather kiss on the ear.

It was a lucky thing for Tyson that he dodged just the least bit, or he might have been severely wounded. When she kissed—at him, on this occasion—her jaws snapped viciously.

"Look out what you're doing!" he growled, swinging her lightly to his shoulder.

She hung poised like a fluffy, curving feather, blowing kisses with both hands at the audience.

"It's you who'd better look out," she advised, as she jumped down and they advanced, hand in hand, to take the call.

Until now she had been too concerned with her own affairs to pay much attention to the audience; but now she had to, a little.

Her smiling gaze was drawn mechanically to the boxes first, and then she saw Lord Anthony Harland.

He had come to the Viaduct Empire to see her, of course; and he was alone. She let him know that she knew he was there, and then threw herself heart, soul, and body into all the coquetry the turn allowed her.

THE BLUE AURA

She danced like thistledown and smiled like a fiend. Molly Brian was still in the wings, envy written large over her equally large face. Between the Drum and Clog Queen, her husband, and the interested young man in the box, Dora began to enjoy herself as she would never have thought possible that evening.

Then it was Turco's entrance, the signal for a loud burst of applause. He came on with his furious chain somersaults as if shot out of a gun, and arose, calm and leering, hands in pockets, cigarette in his grossly painted mouth.

Poor Turco!

He was working for nothing now. He could grin and caper and exhaust the audience with laughter simply because every stage trick in the book was second nature to him. His heart might be broken, but he could still do it, although he was working for nothing.

One thing, however—Turco did not see a single face in the audience that night. He took his calls, but he saw no one. He took encores, and fooled about on the audience side of the apron when the curtain came down, in consternation at being caught outside, and wound up with his famous trick of falling into

THE BLUE AURA

the big property drum in the orchestra. But he saw no one.

As he hurried away toward the dressing-room afterward, Dora close behind him, tears were rolling down his whitened cheeks.

"Oh, poor Turco!" she cried, gripping his arm hard. "Oh, Turco, it was plain hell, wasn't it?"

She sobbed, too. Rage and sympathy and sorrow mingled in her heart in hopeless confusion.

"You don't want to mind," he said awkwardly.

She did mind, though; but what it was apart from Turco's tears she did not quite know. Whether it was Dumpling being dead and buried that afternoon, or Ted's past coming to light in gross, fair flesh, or Harland, she was not sure.

She was so excited she could scarcely breathe. When she thought of Turco having to grin and play the fool, she sobbed; when she thought of the Drum and Clog Queen, she gnashed her teeth; and when she thought of Harland, madness surged over her.

The Viaduct Empire was not a big theater, and she shared a dressing-room with Ted.

THE BLUE AURA

He followed her up immediately, slammed the door, and stood ready to give her battle.

Such being the case, Dora refused to fight, and adopted an air of cold unconcern. She began in a businesslike way to prepare herself for the street. She sat down, an ankle flung across the other knee, and unlaced the pale pink ribbons that bound her slippers. Finished with one, she reversed the attitude and began on the other.

"Well?" demanded Ted impatiently.

"Well—what?"

"What did you mean by being such an idiot? You nearly bit my ear."

"Coward!" she taunted. "Was it afraid, then, it might get nipped?"

"You're a jealous little cat!"

"Jealous? Oh, I like that," said Dora, breathing hard. "What have I to be jealous of?"

This was an embarrassing question.

He himself did have a cause for jealousy, and he was not in the least proud about concealing it.

He went over to her and gripped her wrists, bending down so that his face almost touched hers.

THE BLUE AURA

"I saw that fellow in the box—I saw you look at him. After what happened—last week—if you dare——!"

"Dare what?" Dora asked in a curiously flat voice.

"To play about—flirt—and hurt me——"

"What will you do? Go back to your Molly?"

"You silly fool! As though I ever cared, or could care, for anybody in this world but you! And you've treated me like a pick-pocket lately—just because I cared so much."

"She drove you to drink, too—that big, fat blonde," Dora stated coldly.

"And you might drive me to murder," he said in a husky whisper.

Dora closed her eyes. Garishly bright as the little room was, with its twenty unshaded electric bulbs, it grew black in her sight.

Ted sank on his knees, terrified by her sudden pallor.

"Darling—I didn't mean to frighten you. What *have* I done, that we can't be friends?"

He knelt before her and buried his face in her fluffy tulle skirts.

The poor clown!

THE BLUE AURA

For it was the handsome boy, so strong and stalwart, so lovably quick to repent of his hot speech, who was the true clown where life itself was concerned—not Turco.

Dora clasped her hands to her painfully throbbing heart.

"You haven't done anything—really," she gasped. "Only the night Dumppling died—it seems years ago, somehow—she told me about a dream she had. She dreamed that Turco killed him—Lord Anthony."

Ted got to his feet. The mention of Dumppling reminded him that he was not the only unhappy man in the world.

"I think we'd best hurry, or Turco will be ready first, and he might not wait. We can't let the old chap go home alone."

"Oh, no!" Dora also sprang up. She remembered Turco's uncanny tears. "Mrs. Petrosini has a room for him. Yes—we must hurry."

Turco was dressed first, but he had waited for them.

How could he go off by himself?

CHAPTER IX.

ALL might have been well—or better—if they hadn't been obliged to play the week out at the Viaduct Empire, with Molly Brian in the same bill.

Dora's superstition was aroused by her husband's passionate outburst about Harland. Vain as she was, she did not want murder committed on her account. That would have been carrying a compliment too far.

Most women can be jealous. Dora, perhaps, could be more jealous than most. The presence of Miss Brian was an antidote to superstition.

Having softened toward her husband, Dora grew hard again when the big blonde appeared; and Miss Brian was always appearing. She seemed to live in the wings, clad perpetually in white buckskin tights and pseudo-military accouterments.

Turco and she avoided each other like the plague; but she smiled at Dora, and was

THE BLUE AURA

smiled back at in such alarming fashion that she dared not introduce herself.

Poor Tyson kept to the privacy of his dressing-room as much as possible; but there were moments when he had to be in the wings, and these were golden opportunities for Miss Brian. He scarcely dared be civil to her with the Gorgon eye of Dora on him; but she did not seem to mind, and once she went so far as to put her hand on his arm—a very dark deed, in Dora's opinion. Had it been anybody else but Molly—out-of-the-past, she would have thought nothing of it. The freemasonry of the profession permitted even greater liberties than that.

Dora, however, had no ordinary imagination. She believed the worst of her husband and Miss Brian, not only in the past but in the present. The day he got his hair cut she accused him of a secret rendezvous with the blonde charmer. In vain did he point to his shorn head as an explanation of what he had done with his time. Dora professed to see no difference.

When she caught him making out a laundry list she accused him of writing to Miss Brian. He flourished the evidence of his in-

THE BLUE AURA

nocence before her eyes, but she shut them and refused to look.

She was, in fact, cooking up a first-class drama for herself, playing the rôle of deceived wife, making it passionate and cold by turns. She saw herself deserted and turning in bitter desolation to the only man who understood her.

It would have been very sad indeed—if it were true.

Toward the end of the week, Harland again appeared in the box, and remained only for the Tyro-Turco act. This was the signal for another domestic row, or rather a crescendo of the one that had been going on all the time.

Ted took his trouble to Turco. He was jealous of Dora, and Dora was jealous of him: what were they to do about it?

"Kiss and make up," said Turco, who was sick of their fighting.

"But Dora won't—she hates me," said the unhappy husband.

"Then why is she jealous?"

"Because she's a devil. I'd do anything in the world for her."

Turco looked at his partner, the monkey's

THE BLUE AURA

eyes blinking pathetically. Turco's heart was just a dead thing in those days, but even then it was better than most people's.

"I knew we'd have trouble," he said slowly. "I knew it that first night when you brought her to Chapin's. There may be heavy trouble. I wish I could think of something."

"I wish you could," Ted cried fervently. "Isn't it rotten luck Molly should turn up here this week? And we'll run into her again next month in Portsmouth!"

"That'll put the lid on it," said Turco. "I must talk to Dora and find out what's the matter with her."

He did talk to Dora.

Dora's imaginative drama had carried itself to an Ibsenish climax. The deserted wife by this time was learning to love "the only man who understood her" and preparing to fly with him to lands and fate unknown. And Dora, of course, was her own heroine.

She received Turco's diplomatic efforts in the cause of peace with wan smiles.

Turco did not know how Ted had wounded her, she said. She could forgive anything but deception (which was rather rich, coming from her). She felt she had lost Ted's love

THE BLUE AURA

—perhaps she'd never had it. It must always have belonged to Molly.

"And perhaps you *will* lose it if you're not careful," said Turco, meaning well, but working even greater mischief. "Anyway, I know what's the matter with you. You're getting notes from his lordship and meeting him on the sly—that's what you're doing. Don't talk to me about your being deceived."

Dora's eyes opened wide. How had Turco guessed? A part, at least, of his accusation was true, and the rest of it was coming true that afternoon.

"Awfully clever, aren't you?" she said sarcastically.

"Dora, for heaven's sake, what's the matter with you?" Turco cried in desperation.

If she had said she was suffering from enlargement of the imagination it would have been the truth and he might have understood; but Dora did not know the nature of her disease.

"I guess I'm dead sick of everything and everybody," she proclaimed unkindly.

Turco slunk away. He did not want her to be dead sick of him. For all his querulousness, he loved her dearly. He had always

THE BLUE AURA

loved her, in his peculiar, impersonal way. That was why he stood so much of her nonsense.

After he left, Dora went to her tryst. She had not seen Harland to speak to since the night she ran away from him; but they had written to each other. His letters came to the theater, and Ted took no notice, because there were always plenty of letters for Dora—press clippings, dressmakers' and beauty specialists' advertisements, and such like. He never wanted to know what was in them.

As she drove to Eaton Place it flashed across her mind that that was how Turco came to be so wise. He had seen one of the letters in the rack, and doubtless he was familiar with Lord Anthony's writing. She was always fearing yet discounting Turco's unholy power of second sight. Turco couldn't fool her; he had merely made a good guess.

After all, what was she going to do? Did she really want to see Lord Anthony Harland again? Was she falling in love with him?

The questions vexed her. Better to see him and try to understand the situation and herself.

THE BLUE AURA

He was expecting her, and tea was ready. The eyes of the sedate manservant who let her in were veiled in discretion. Dora would have liked to ask him what he was thinking about, and how he dared to have such thoughts. In the mourning put on for Dump-ling, which served for a deserted wife's costume, she followed him haughtily into the study.

"Mrs. Tyson, my lord."

Harland took both of her hands warmly.

"I thought I was never, never going to have this pleasure again!" he exclaimed. "Sit down—make yourself comfy. Let me take your coat. How thin and sad you look in that black dress!"

Dora raised eyes full of melancholy.

"I am very unhappy," she said in her carefully rehearsed rôle.

"So am I," Harland replied, sobering instantly.

He, at least, was not play-acting, and Dora did not know that she was.

"I don't think you had better write to me any more. Turco suspects—he must have seen one of your letters."

"Are you afraid of the professor?"

THE BLUE AURA

"Not exactly—only there might be trouble. My husband is jealous. He saw you both times—and we've had an awful week. There—there's another girl that he used to be fond of. She's in the bill this week."

"Not really!"

"Yes. Perhaps you saw her—a big, fat, yellow-haired thing named Molly Brian."

Harland laughed.

"So the strong man is making up to his old love, eh?"

"I don't quite know—but we don't feel the same toward each other."

Harland sat down on the couch beside her and took her hand.

"Tell me all about it. How do you feel yourself?" He was most sympathetic.

His arm crept about her shoulders.

"Tell me. You love me, don't you?"

"I—I'm not sure," she whispered.

"But you're unhappy."

"Oh, yes—dreadfully unhappy!"

"Couldn't I change all that? I want to take you away from the whole world. Have you ever been to Spain, beautiful Dora?"

It was a great pity that the unprincipled villain should play the part of Dora's hero

THE BLUE AURA

with such perfection. The word "Spain" had done it. Spain provoked mad visions of sun and bullfights, neither of which was to be had in London at the moment.

She thought of herself in a yellow satin gown, with a fringed shawl drawn over one shoulder and about her hips, the stem of a crimson rose between her lips, and castanets in her hands.

She saw herself dancing with a partner dressed appropriately in a velvet-waisted jacket, curiously shaped nether garments, and a wide-brimmed black hat.

Imagination could not envisage Lord Anthony Harland as this man, however. Male Spanish dancers never wore monocles. She let that part of the vision slide.

"No," she said; "I have never been to Spain."

"I am going. I start this day week."

He was going away—to the romantic land of Spain! Dora's heart throbbed painfully.

"I shall spend a week in Paris first, and then go on straight to Madrid. Afterward—anywhere. It doesn't matter."

Dora sighed. It flashed across her mind that she was worse than a fool to listen to

THE BLUE AURA

all this. To her credit she had that thought, but to her discredit she banished it instantly.

"Would you care to think it over?" he suggested. "This day week, at eleven o'clock, Charing Cross. Don't worry about clothes. You can buy anything you like in Paris."

"Yes, I'll think it over," said Dora, with an effort. But, having committed herself thus far, she was loath to go any further.

She let him kiss her, but her response was feeble, and she left almost immediately, without having any tea.

A great depression was upon her. What was she about to do?

The question of right and wrong did not enter into it at all, as far as she was concerned. She allowed her feelings to govern her every action.

That night after the performance she went to Chapin's for supper with Ted and Turco, and saw the man whom she had every reason to believe was her father entertaining a bohemian party.

"He's a wicked old man," she said to herself, "and I'm his daughter."

It seemed somehow to excuse her own wickedness.

PART IV.
HARLEQUIN'S REVENGE.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER Dora had gone, Lord Anthony sighed deeply and went to his crowded little desk, which was like a lady's writing table in its inconsequence.

Out of a drawer he took a number of papers, frowned, and made a half-hearted pretense of looking them over. Then he examined his check book, and frowned more deeply still.

The accounts from his Irish property were not yet due. They brought in little enough, in his opinion; but they were pretty much all he possessed. His brother, the Marquis of Kincroll, could be counted on for the loan of a thousand or so, if it was to save the family from scandal.

And it was to save the family from scandal that Lord Anthony Harland contemplated his visit abroad.

Among the business papers was a solicitor's letter ordering him to take himself elsewhere immediately unless he wished to compromise

THE BLUE AURA

the name of a woman whom he had already sufficiently injured in her husband's sight. Unless he did so, "our client, Mr. Robert Darrell of The Manor, Hillborough, Sussex, will be obliged to take proceedings."

"Our client, Mr. Robert Darrell," had also communicated through his solicitor with the Marquis of Kincroll, and the latter had advised his young brother to take the advice.

Mrs. Robert Darrell had written him that her heart "was breaking," but she did not suggest any way by which it could be mended. Apparently her husband had forgiven her the indiscretion of being found out, and she was too wise to take any further risk.

She loved him, Harland believed, but she was done with him. That fact was only too clear.

Dora was his mean revenge. He meant to let Mrs. Robert Darrell know about Dora, and he was not in the least afraid of scandal where the foolish little ballet dancer was concerned.

Like Dora, he was without principles, but with this difference—he had not even the excuse of imagination for what he meant to do.

He wrote to his brother asking for money;

THE BLUE AURA

to the solicitor stating that he was leaving for the Continent Friday of next week; to his own solicitor inquiring about more money. Lastly, he wrote to Miss Edith Trelawny at the theater where she was employed, inclosing a five-pound note, and instructing her about his address, in case she received any communication from Mrs. Darrell during his absence.

He was quite in ignorance of Edith's relationship to Dora, just as she was ignorant of Dora's friendship for him. The mother and daughter were in no sense of the word confidantes. Indeed, it was very seldom that they saw each other.

The last arrangement Harland made was to put his little house on the books of the local estate agent. He offered it furnished for six months. That was the length of time he calculated he would need to be away. In six months any threatened scandal would have blown over.

He did not look ahead as to what was to become of Dora. That was her affair. At the moment he was occupied with his own unhappiness and how best to allay it. His love for the woman whose reputation he had jeopardized was very real. She had kept

THE BLUE AURA

him dangling at arm's length for three years. She had flirted outrageously with him, written him love letters, let him hope and believe that she cared. Now, when she could have been free at the expense of a little scandal, she turned her back on him. He was not the dearest thing in the world to her.

It was a bitter moment. He thought of her tearful and contrite in the midst of her family, explaining that it was all a silly flirtation and had meant nothing. Perhaps it *had* meant nothing. Her skirts were clear of technical wrongdoing—that he knew.

In anguish he contemplated her photograph, a smiling little butterfly of a woman with pearl drops in her ears and her hair carefully waved. She was not pretty. She merely held his heart—such as it was.

He could not bring himself to destroy her photograph, although, to do him justice, he had destroyed her letters, those silly, frivolous notes that said a great deal more than they meant.

He had accepted her verdict. She was of his own class, and he could not injure her without her consent.

Dora was different; Dora did not matter.

THE BLUE AURA

Such a man as Lord Anthony Harland deserves no sympathy; but perhaps his mother would have pitied him, had she known. Certainly no one else could. There was even a cold, fishy look in the eye of his manservant when he announced a part of their plans.

He was taking Dodge with him because he did not know how to get along without a servant.

In his gloomy frame of mind he sought companionship after the letters were dispatched. He dined at his club with an acquaintance, and afterward they went to a theater.

It was his bad luck to see in a box Mrs. Robert Darrell, flanked right and left by her husband and mother-in-law. They did not see him. He made an excuse and left after the first act.

He knew what had happened. The Darrells had come up to town, and were displaying themselves *en famille* to show the world that no discordance existed.

It was too much. Harland felt that he almost hated the woman. Either she was happy, or else she was a marvelous actress. He had seen her laughing into her husband's

THE BLUE AURA

eyes as if no other man in the world existed for her.

The next day, through the social gossip column in a newspaper, he learned that the Darrells were back in the country again, entertaining a big house party.

He knew those parties. Once he had been a favored guest. It was delightful at the Manor—always a horse to ride or a motor at one's disposal; good meals and perfect service; and dancing and bridge in the evenings.

It was all over for him, yet it made him furious to know that it would go on just as well without him, perhaps better.

CHAPTER II.

BY the time Dora got back to New Compton Street she was laughing heartily at herself, and tears were close behind her laughter.

Was she going to be anybody's fool? She rather thought not. A wave of tenderness for Ted swept over her.

Leave Ted for that monocled idiot? Rather not! In love with his lordship? Not if she knew herself.

Spain? Dirty, horrible country, she'd heard, with the food something awful; and as for bullfights, she had known all along she could never bring herself to go to one.

Then why had she contemplated a trip to Spain. She couldn't answer that question. She thought she must have been out of her mind.

"Dazzled—that's what I was," she said to herself.

She thought of the consumptive-looking

THE BLUE AURA

girl in the theater, and how all the other girls had despised her for her fine clothes.

"Well, I would have been just like that," said Dora.

This change of mind or heart—whichever it was—came by a simple process. On the way home Dora had overtaken an old former ballet friend. Eileen had left the stage to be married, and Dora had not seen her for two years. This afternoon she was pushing a very nice perambulator in which reposed an adorable infant.

Dora walked on with her, as their ways lay together for some distance, and heard all about how happy she was, and what a dear little flat she had, and how good her husband was to her.

"I'm so grateful to him," Eileen said. "I can never repay him for being so good to me. And I'm glad you're married, too, Dora, even though you haven't left the stage yet. Perhaps you'll have to—one of these days."

She smiled and patted the hood of the perambulator.

"I wonder!" Dora exclaimed.

"And is your husband good to you?" her friend asked.

THE BLUE AURA

The "deserted wife" was obliged to reconstruct her views hastily. It suddenly flashed on her that Ted was good, one of the best.

"Rather! I can have anything I want. I'm not obliged to work. He wants us to take a flat or something. We were speaking about it only the other day."

"I expect you like being with him," said Eileen. "But when you have a baby it's a business to go on tour. But I always go with my husband, and baby, too. You wouldn't believe how fond Jack is of the kid—and he used to be so wild. But, depend on it, we're always glad when he gets an engagement in town and we can be home."

"Doesn't it make the baby delicate to racket him about?" Dora asked.

"Does he look delicate?"

There was no denying that he looked the picture of health.

"He's just one of us," said Eileen. "He'd miss his daddy; and as for Jack—well, you know, Dora, you don't have any life unless you all keep together. It's the separations that do the harm in our profession."

"I should think you'd find it expensive—

THE BLUE AURA

you not working, and the baby needing things all the time, I suppose."

Eileen smiled. She had a sweet face, with eyes shining clear.

"You can manage anything—when there's plenty of love. It doesn't seem hard. There are so many things we used to have that we don't need—restaurant meals and expensive clothes; and now that the baby's here, Jack's given up booze. You'd be surprised how much that saves."

The two young women parted near Leicester Square, Dora promising to come to see Eileen, and kissing the adorable baby, who caught at her hat and tried to pull it off.

She went on her way flushed, her eyes shining, a delicious thrill of envious delight coursing through every vein.

It was a disappointment not to find Ted in when she arrived home. She wanted to tell him about Eileen and the baby, and to take up the suggestion of a flat, which he had broached a little while ago.

Turco was there, however, so she had someone to talk to; and she was so excited that she scarcely stopped to wonder what had become of her husband.

THE BLUE AURA

Turco sat cross-legged on the floor, listening to her, the "queer" look in his eyes.

"How lovely you are, Dora—all a rosy pink mist. That's love."

"You mean my aura?" she asked.

"Yes, of course."

"Oh, Turco, I'm so glad! I'm going to be awfully good, Turco. No more tempers, no more sulks. I've been rather horrid lately, haven't I?"

"Something unspeakable," Turco agreed. "What was the matter? This afternoon you were horrid enough, and now you're behaving like an angel."

When it suited her, Dora could be as frank as a child.

"I was going to run away with him—with Lord Anthony. Charing Cross next Friday—going to Spain. What d'you think of that, Turco?"

She wanted to surprise and shock him; but Turco merely blinked.

"I think it's a pity you should have such ideas," he said.

"Don't you think I'm wicked?"

She was rather disappointed at his taking it so quietly.

THE BLUE AURA

"I suppose you must be. Original sin is wicked, and there have been times when I thought the devil was a woman."

"Oh, Turco! But *I'm good!*" She stamped her foot and frowned. "Say I'm good, Turco—that I'm all a rosy mist of love and goodness. You saw it yourself."

Turco rubbed his stubble of gray hair and blinked in his monkey way.

"I never know for more than five minutes at a time whether you're going to be good or not. You're too easily influenced. What made you want to run off with Harland? 'Cause he asked you to?"

Dora flushed uncomfortably.

"And what made you change your mind?" Turco persisted. "Because you met a woman with a baby who told you how happy she was? Haven't you anything in you yourself, Dora? Are you a chameleon?"

"Don't you call me names!" Dora said fiercely. "Chameleon yourself!"

Turco laughed.

"Well, we can't sit here jawing all the evening. Time to be getting along to the hall."

"But I haven't had my tea."

THE BLUE AURA

"That isn't my fault. You'll have to wait."

"But Ted hasn't come in yet. Where can he be?"

Turco shrugged his shoulders and reached for his hat.

"Ted'll come along. You haven't treated him any too well lately, you know——"

"Oh, but I shall be so nice to him tonight!" Dora exclaimed. "And, Turco—when we get that flat you'll come to live with us."

"If you're sure you want me," said Turco, trying not to seem too pleased.

CHAPTER III.

IT was their last night at the Viaduct Empire. Next week they had no date, and Dora meant to snatch the opportunity for flat hunting and furnishing.

Ted showed up in the dressing-room a little late. He said he'd been out to the Zoo with a chap of his acquaintance.

For once in her life, Dora was unsuspecting, although he stated it rather clumsily.

"Well, you *are* a one!" she cried. "Make haste, now. You've only got ten minutes."

She wafted out of the dressing-room to give him more space, and in the corridor ran into Miss Molly Brian wearing street clothes and getting a sound scolding from the stage manager. Obviously she had just come in.

"You go on at eight, and we've had to put Number Twelve in your place. You know very well, Miss Brian——"

"Oh, chuck it! I can go on in Twelve's place, can't I? You're always shifting us

THE BLUE AURA

about when it suits you. You can do it to suit me, for once in a way."

"Well, what's your excuse, then?"

"I' been spending my time in the monkey house, if you must know; but as there's plenty of 'em knocking about here——"

Turco was passing her as she spoke, and possibly she combined impertinence to the manager with insult to Turco.

Dora, following Turco, felt herself grow cold all over. She grasped his arm.

"Turco—she and Ted—that woman! They've been to the Zoo together. Ted said that was why he was late—and you just heard what she said."

"Pouff! It's nearly nine o'clock. The Zoo closes at five."

"Then where have they been since?"

"I don't believe it. It's only your silly imagination. And where were you this afternoon, if I may ask?"

"That's got nothing to do with it. I was going to be so happy, Turco—so good!"

"Why can't you keep on going to be so happy and so good?" he jeered.

"Because he's killed me!"

"Then you do care something for him?"

THE BLUE AURA

"I did."

"That's what I mean. You change for anything. You're like a postage stamp with the gum off—you won't stick."

Dora moved away, deeply offended; but what he said impressed her. She'd show Turco that she could stick—for a little while, anyway.

With a superhuman effort of will, she determined that she'd die rather than row with Ted over his visit to the Zoo with Molly Brian and their subsequent doings. She'd even be pleasant to him.

But it galled her horribly. In the humiliation of pride it suffered her soul grew a little. She had taken the first painful grip on self-control.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH she managed to keep silent, even to fool Ted into thinking she did not suspect anything, she watched him and Molly Brian that evening with the vigilance of a cat at a mouse-hole.

It seemed to her that they avoided each other more than usual, which was suspicious in itself. Of course!—they were pretending they hadn't been together all the afternoon. Ted was particularly guilty in his manner, and Dora hated him for an increased tenderness toward herself.

But after Turco's jeering criticism she simply had to "stick." Underneath she boiled and seethed like a caldron; but Turco was watching her, and after their act was over he came home with them.

Little by little, Dora calmed down; that is to say, one moment she felt she would burst, and the next, under Turco's blinking, wondering gaze—she would determine to play the

THE BLUE AURA

woman of the world and ignore her husband's lapse.

The main reason was that she had foolishly confided her own silly escapade to Turco. Turco knew that she was quite as wicked as Ted ever could be. Turco knew pretty much all there was to know of her outrageous conduct. He wouldn't tell Ted, of course, but he knew, and that made it inconvenient for her to have the wild scene her jealousy demanded.

At supper she thought she would prove to Turco how generous and high-minded she really was. She was hypocritical sweetness personified.

"Teddie, my lamb, I was talking with Turco this afternoon about our taking a flat together—having some sort of a home, you know. Next week I'm going house-hunting. First thing Monday morning I'm——"

"*Don't!*" Tyson interrupted so vehemently that both Turco and Dora started.

"Oh! Why not?"

Her husband avoided looking at her. He made a business of opening a bottle of beer, and a little crimson flush crept up the back of his neck.

THE BLUE AURA

"What good would it be? You said so yourself. Half the time we're on tour——"

"Just half this year," Turco interrupted. "We're booked twenty-six weeks about London, and I wouldn't be surprised if next season it was more."

"That's all right; but who wants the bother of a flat? We're very comfortable here."

Dora's lips quivered. She looked at Turco as much as to say, "You see what happens when *I* try to be good!"

"Of course it was different for you when Dumpling was alive," Ted went on, addressing himself to Turco, "but it must have been a big expense. Now we've got the studio for practice and for you to give your lessons—what more do we want?"

There was a silence. Dora's breast heaved dramatically.

"It was you who suggested it first," she said, when she could trust herself to speak.

"And you who turned it down," Ted replied.

"Well, I've changed my mind. I'd like a place of my own. I met a girl I used to know—Eileen Hogarth. Her husband's an actor, and they're awfully happy. They've

THE BLUE AURA

got a kid—and a flat. She wants me to come and see her.”

“So that’s what put it into your head!”

“Perhaps you think I don’t know what’s taken it out of yours,” Dora retorted.

“Don’t be silly. Some day we might do it, but just now I can’t afford the expense.”

Turco stared at him shrewdly.

“Expense, is it? There’s my furniture, and Dora and me to share expenses.”

Ted seemed exasperated. “I don’t know what’s come over you two. No—no—no! Not next week, anyway. I’ve got too much to do.”

“Who’s asked you to help?” Dora put in.

“Well, I’d want to, wouldn’t I?”

“You act like it,” she retorted sarcastically.

Then she began to cry, and rushed out of the room. Being good was too great a strain on Dora.

Of course there was something behind Ted’s curious behavior, and she was quite certain it was Molly Brian. Perhaps he’d confide in Turco; but Turco wouldn’t tell, any more than he’d tell on her.

The men sat talking in low tones in the sitting-room until very late; but Dora could

THE BLUE AURA

not catch what was said, and finally she sobbed herself to sleep.

She wondered that Ted did not come to comfort her and plead how much he loved her. Perhaps, as Turco suggested, she had lost his love by her wicked behavior of late. She would never have dreamed he had the spirit to pay her back in her own coin.

The next morning—Sunday—Ted was up, breakfasted, and out before she got her eyes fairly open. There was a note from him to say he might not be in for lunch. Turco also had gone; but Dora felt sure he, at least, would return in the course of the morning.

It was a terrible day for her. Neither of the men returned until the late afternoon, and she listened to their lame excuses about shifting the scenery and properties in cold silence.

Not for a moment would she let them think she cared; but Turco's attitude hurt her more than Ted's. A husband is only a husband,—the object of eternal suspicion,—but a friend is different, and now Turco had gone over to Ted, actually if not openly.

"Sly little beast!" said Dora to herself.
"Monkey-face! What do I care?"

THE BLUE AURA

But she did care. It was all the worse because they both seemed so anxious to please her.

It was, "Dora, my darling, we're going to take you to dinner at Chapin's, so make haste and put on that black, glittering thing. Turco and I love you in that frock."

And from Turco, "She shall have a wee drop of champagne, if I have to pay for it myself."

Dora scorned their duplicity, but she buried her feelings. Turco had called her a chameleon, whatever that might be, and she wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of being right until the moment came for a decisive blow. If they could be hypocrites—particularly that saintly Turco—so could she.

Her smile was dangerous as she put on the black, glittering frock. She took an arm of each as they started for Chapin's, and her fingers itched to inflict gripping pain; but she suffered the temptation grimly.

Let this game of deceiving her go on much longer, and she'd teach the two of them a lesson they wouldn't forget in a hurry.

CHAPTER V.

IT did go on, by fits and starts that drove Dora frantic.

On Monday there was a slight slackening. In the evening they took a "bus-man's holiday" and went to a music hall.

But on Tuesday something of very grave importance happened. It was one of those things that sometimes change the whole course of a life.

First of all, in the morning there had come a letter for Ted in what Dora assumed was a woman's writing. He read it, tore it up, and fed the pieces to the flames. And he had done this with the air of clumsy self-consciousness that marked his every action since his visit to the Zoo on Saturday.

Dora asked no questions, because Turco was there and all her pride was up.

So, when Ted mentioned casually that he'd be rather busy that morning in the studio with Turco, she said nothing. They went off, and an hour later she dropped in at the

THE BLUE AURA

studio, where she found Turco alone, engaged in fixing up a trapeze he had brought over from his own place.

"Where's Ted?" she asked, with a misleading air of innocence.

"Oh, he's just stepped out for a minute or two," Turco replied; and his air of innocence was not in the least misleading.

"When do you expect him back?"

"Couldn't say—exactly."

"Where's he gone?"

"How should I know? I'm not his keeper," said Turco rudely. "Blast this thing, anyway!"

He gave a savage kick at the trapeze support, which was refusing to fit the floor buckles they had made for it.

"Perhaps I'm in the way," Dora suggested coldly.

"Well, I'm busy," said Turco in a rather loud, blustering voice, "and I don't see how you can help. I've got something to do besides talk. It's a pity you haven't."

She turned away to hide two tears that suddenly rolled down her cheeks. She hadn't anything to do except overhaul her wardrobe or put in an hour's practice to keep her mus-

THE BLUE AURA

cles in trim. But Turco knew that wasn't her fault. He knew how busy she meant to be this week—how good and happy, too.

"Very well; I'll find something to do!" she cried in challenge, as she ran down the stairs.

Turco called back at her from the top:

"Don't be a fool, Dora—because you'll be mighty sorry if——"

"I'm not going to be a fool any longer," she retorted. "You can tell that to Ted, if he ever shows up here."

Her heart was hard with bitterness, and she clenched her hands to keep from sobbing outright in the street.

"Why do I love Ted? I don't! I hate him. I hate Turco, too!"

All the time the revenge she could take if she wanted to was simmering in her brain. She felt that she hated Lord Anthony Harland even a little bit more than she did Ted and Turco; for, now that there might be some truth in the deserted wife theory, it had ceased to charm her.

That was only play-acting, and this was real. The reality pained her more than she would have thought possible.

Her first thought was to go straight to

THE BLUE AURA

Harland, and she actually started for Eaton Place. On the way, however, she changed her mind and decided to call on Eileen Hogarth. If Eileen wasn't in, well and good—that would be an omen.

But Eileen was in, and so was the baby. Dora was made to stay to lunch, and Eileen's husband appeared, a changed man from the irresponsible young actor he had been before he married Eileen. The atmosphere fairly reeked of domesticity.

Eileen prepared the lunch herself, and Dora held the baby, while Jack Hogarth laid the table. They were laughing all the time, so merry and cheerful that it didn't seem as if there could be a heartache in the world.

"You must come and see us," said Dora, as she was leaving. "Only we're in lodgings—not as nicely fixed as you are."

She was keeping up her pretense bravely.

"We shall have to bring the nipper," Hogarth replied. "We take him everywhere—don't we, mummie?"

"He's so lonesome being left," Eileen explained.

"I want you to bring him," said Dora, a faint shadow reflecting the pain in her eyes.

THE BLUE AURA

"I'd like Ted to see him. And he's so good!"

In this the parents heartily concurred, and bade Dora an affectionate farewell after the manner of their kind, each of them kissing her, and holding up the baby to receive her parting embrace.

It was dawning on Dora that she must make a success of her marriage.

Turco was right. She herself was to blame. She had driven Ted away by her coldness and folly. He must be brought back by the warmth of love.

Could she not forgive, as she prayed every night to be forgiven herself?

Could she not rise to the really noble heights of love? At least, Ted still pretended to love her, and if she accepted his pretense, squared their accounts without asking questions, all might be well.

How to make a beginning? She had been much impressed by the aspect of Eileen's luncheon table. It was graced with a glass bowl of flowers and by doilies instead of a cloth. Dora did not stop to think what the table in her own haphazard sitting-room would look like without complete protection.

THE BLUE AURA

Her imagination saw it the same as Eileen's, smooth as glass, delightfully original and esthetic.

Having no doilies, she would buy some—also a glass bowl. With Dora there was never any time like the present. She would scratch together a meal at home—such as home was—and make it worthy even of Eileen. At least, it gave her something to do and took her mind off Harland and senseless revenge.

Turco was right. She must stick, and prove that she was a postage stamp provided with a good backing of gum.

Accordingly she sought her favorite shop in Oxford Street where you could buy pretty nearly everything.

And it was there that the really dreadful thing happened.

As she was coming in through one swing door, Ted was going out through another, followed by Molly Brian. They were both heavily burdened with bundles, and a taxicab was waiting for them.

Dora stood frozen just inside the door.

They did not see her. She watched them drive off together, engrossed with each other,

THE BLUE AURA

laughing, talking, so engaged in settling the numerous parcels that they had no eyes for anybody.

Poor little Dora's high resolutions died an instantaneous and brutal death.

All the time she hadn't half believed it was true. Now she saw it for herself.

When she got home Turco was in the sitting-room at Mrs. Petrosini's, reposing cross-legged on the couch, reading the evening paper.

He did not look up as she passed through to her bedroom; but presently he called out, as if he had marked something strange in her manner:

"Hello, there! What's the matter? Anything wrong?"

"Nothing that I know of," Dora replied, reappearing minus her hat and coat. She went over to the fire and poked it gently. There was no suggestion of viciousness in the action. Turco looked at her around the edge of his paper. Her face was chalky white, and her expression, except for the eyes, was that of a dead woman.

"What's the matter, Dora? Are you ill?"

"I don't want your sympathy. You're a

THE BLUE AURA

false friend, Turco. I would never have believed it if I hadn't proved it for myself," she said coldly.

"Me? A false friend!" Turco nearly exploded. "I like that! Explain yourself."

"I'll explain nothing. You took me for a fool, didn't you? Perhaps you can tell me where Ted is this minute. Can you do that?"

"Eh?" Turco looked foolish.

"Well, I'll tell you—since you pretend not to know. He's with Molly Brian, buying her clothes—at least, he was about an hour ago. And you tried to make me think you didn't like her."

Turco folded his newspaper and rolled himself a cigarette.

"You're dotty, my girl—that's what you are, or else you're trying to pull my leg. Ted's got no one on his mind but you, and Molly is about the last——"

"Stow it!" Dora exclaimed. "I don't want to talk about it, anyway."

She sat down on the hassock, her chin resting on her clenched hands, her gaze fixed on the flickering coals. Turco watched her in puzzled silence. When she spoke again her

THE BLUE AURA

voice was friendly enough, and she reverted to quite another subject:

“Turco—Dumpling used to say you had such lovely ‘thought forms’—is that the same as an aura?”

The mention of Dumpling caused Turco’s eyes to grow misty. It was not often that anyone spoke to him of her, and he was always longing to talk about her.

“You simply had to have good thought forms when you were with Dumpling. She was so good herself—such a patient, sweet little kid.”

“Oh, yes, she was, Turco. But is it the same thing as an aura?”

“In a manner of speaking, yes,” Turco replied. “I can’t explain very well to you; you wouldn’t understand. It’s altogether like, as though you were inside a sort of iridescent soap bubble, and thought forms might be like things you see reflected in the bubble.”

“What an idea! If you could choose, Turco, what color aura would you like to have?”

“Blue—pale blue, with some mauve and gold in it,” Turco replied promptly.

Dora sighed.

THE BLUE AURA

"I thought blue was pretty good. But, Turco, I'll never wear a blue aura. Mine is green and crimson, I know—and that means jealousy and passions, you told me once."

Turco half closed his eyes.

"It's grayish just now. You're depressed, Dora. I wish you'd stay one color for five minutes."

"I'll never wear a blue aura now," Dora repeated sadly.

In her mind it was something resembling a halo.

The door opened, and Tyson came in, glowing from the cold, rubbing his hands and grinning cheerfully.

"Hullo, you two! Having a séance or something?"

"Where've you been?" growled Turco.

Ted slapped him on the back and winked broadly.

"Now, you know where I've been, so what's the use of asking?"

There was undoubtedly a *double entendre* in his tone. Dora sneered faintly at Turco and suffered her husband's kiss. She was quite convinced as to Turco's hypocrisy; but her mind was made up firmly to say nothing

THE BLUE AURA

whatever on the subject again. To-day was only Tuesday. On Friday they would both learn what it means to deceive a woman. Friday would be an unlucky day for somebody.

CHAPTER VI.

THURSDAY afternoon Lord Anthony Harland was very busy completing preparations for his enforced holiday abroad; but he found time to smile over a quaint telegram he had just received. At least, he thought it was quaint.

Don't think I care for you or anybody else in the world, but I'll be there to-morrow.
Dora.

"Little monkey!" he exclaimed to himself. "At least, she's frank enough, but I don't believe her."

What he didn't believe was that she didn't care for him. He had felt all along that she would be there, and even before the receipt of the telegram had instructed his servant to make arrangements for two.

The crowded little house had been dismantled of most of its possessions. The family portraits, which had come to Harland by spe-

THE BLUE AURA

cial deed, had been dispatched to his brother Kincroll, in bond as it were for the loan of money he had demanded. Kincroll would probably never see his money again, and Harland was only likely to see the portraits when he visited his brother. Still, they were in the family.

The last of the personal things to be disposed of was the photograph of the butterfly woman who had worked all the mischief, according to the man who loved her. How self-satisfied she seemed, got up for the photographer in the carefully groomed mode of several years ago, her hair all waved, pearls in her ears and about her throat, and a gown that had undoubtedly suggested the occasion.

She reeked of vanity, but she had charm, that priceless gift of the gods. And charm is power. As Harland took the photograph from the frame and tore it to bits, he was destroying all that remained of his heart. Such as he was, he loved her. Such as she was, he had thought she loved him.

He believed he was through with her forever—that in time, perhaps, he might forget. So do men's fancies rove. To-morrow every-

THE BLUE AURA

thing would be cast behind him. The only bright thought in that connection was that he had plenty of ready money to see him through. In consideration of the valuable portraits, Kincrollly had been remarkably generous. Yet Harland felt himself an outcast, in spite of the money. He wished he had the power to go back to the life where he belonged. Olive Darrell had made him fritter away his potentialities by keeping him dangling.

Well, her reign was over! That was how he put it. It seemed more self-complimentary than the other way about.

And then the doorbell rang—and her reign was not over.

“Miss Trelawny, my lord,” announced Dodge. “I believe you said that if Miss Trelawny called at any time——”

“Oh, yes, I’ll see her,” Harland interrupted.

He had always suspected that Trelawny would go in for some delicate form of blackmail. She was no ordinary person, and there had been times in the past when the sight of her prim visage and glittering eyeglasses had caused him to shudder.

THE BLUE AURA

The remains of Olive Darrell's photograph were still being consumed by fire when Edith Trelawny came in.

Trim and trig in navy-blue serge, small hat, furred umbrella, and eyeglasses, she stood respectfully before Harland and hoped she found him well.

"Quite well, Trelawny, thank you. I'm off to the Continent to-morrow. Anything special I can do for you?"

"Indeed, my lord, I scarcely know how to say, since you are leaving town. I've a message from madam."

"Oh? From Mrs. Darrell?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Indeed! A—letter?"

He was puzzled, and very eager in spite of himself.

Edith Trelawny was also puzzled.

"In the circumstances, madam couldn't very well write. Is it possible you haven't heard the sad news, my lord?"

"Sad news? Good heavens! What——"

"It was in all the papers, my lord."

"I haven't seen the beastly papers for two days. I've been far too busy."

He might have added and too wretched to

THE BLUE AURA

take any interest in the doings of the world and his fellowmen.

Edith licked her lips and the eyeglasses gleamed. Who does not enjoy being the first to impart serious news?

"Mr. Robert Darrell met with an accident in the hunting field yesterday morning, my lord. He broke his neck."

"Dead?"

"Unfortunately, my lord. He was dead when they picked him up. I believe madam had word that you were going away——"

"They probably told her," Harland muttered. He felt stupefied.

Edith gazed at the ceiling long enough for him to collect himself, and then went on:

"Madam telegraphed me, and I went down last evening to see her. Of course I couldn't refuse to go, although I had to get someone to take my place at the theater on that night, as you may imagine."

"Yes. You saw her—where? You didn't go to the Manor, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, my lord! What with him lying dead and all, and old madam so set against me for what I did through no fault of my

THE BLUE AURA

own beyond being fond of young madam and quite sympathetic, as you know——”

“I know. Where did you meet her? For heaven’s sake, woman, get on with your story.”

He was eaten alive with impatience.

“I’m sorry, my lord. I’m that upset I scarcely know where to begin.”

“You don’t look upset.”

“No? It’s habit, I suppose. All my life I’ve been in the habit of repressing my feelings.”

“Well, I haven’t!” Harland exclaimed.

“Just so, my lord. I was about to say, madam telegraphed me to meet her at six o’clock at Mrs. Debbens’.”

“The lodge?”

“Yes, my lord. Mrs. Debbens used to be a particular friend of mine, and it would be all right. Well, I saw her—madam—and you wouldn’t believe how broken up she was——”

“Naturally—her husband’s being killed so suddenly,” Harland said with an effort.

“Oh, I dare say she felt that very much. You’ll forgive me, my lord, if I seem to be personal, but——”

THE BLUE AURA

"Yes—go on."

"Madam was badly broken up about your going away. She said I must see your lordship, and you mustn't go on any account. She says that for the present, you know, she can't communicate with you; but in a week or two after the funeral—well, she'll manage, somehow. She said I was to give your lordship her very best love, and she hopes you'll understand."

Exultation shone in Harland's eyes. Here was his chance to return with interest the bitter blow that had been dealt him. Would he take it?

The blackened remnants of the woman's photograph swayed to and fro in the heat of the fire. He looked at them curiously. He had torn her to bits, utterly destroyed her, burnt her to a crisp—and with her his own heart.

Edith coughed discreetly. She was much too well trained to shift her position or twist about on her feet; but she knew how to attract attention to herself.

His gaze, so long abstracted, returned to her.

"I'm seeing madam again to-morrow.

THE BLUE AURA

She'll be expecting a message from your lordship. What am I to say?"

"Tell her—tell her—that I understand," he answered thickly. "That's all."

"Thank you, my lord—and have I permission to bid your lordship good evening?"

"You have. Thanks very much, Tre-lawny."

He pressed the bell, and when Dodge had shown her out he demanded the newspapers.

CHAPTER VII.

SINCE the fatal Tuesday afternoon, Dora had been more of an enigma than ever to her husband and Turco. The men had apparently come to some sort of an understanding over the matter of Ted's shopping excursion with Molly Brian.

Turco, feeling himself under a cloud where Dora's good opinion was concerned, had told his partner that he wouldn't stand for any nonsense of that sort. Dora was obliged to forgive Turco, who proved that he hadn't been a party to the intrigue by insisting that Ted should explain. Ted did explain—but badly. He said he had chanced to meet Miss Brian in the shop, where he had gone to buy some haberdashery for himself, and she asked him to help her with her own parcels.

It was a lie that Dora could have picked to pieces with a twirl of her fingers, but its very flagrancy kept her quiet. Ted had bought no haberdashery. She knew well enough what came into the house, especially

THE BLUE AURA

when it was new finery for him. Tyson was a young man to whom even a new necktie is a delight to be shared, and certainly on this occasion he would go out of his way to flaunt any evidence that might have supported his careless excuse.

But, as Dora apparently forgot it, so did he. He was engrossed in something of far greater importance to himself, and she let him be. They saw very little of each other in the two days that followed.

Nor did she see much of Turco. He, poor fellow, was taking advantage of this short holiday to tear up his home—the home that had meant nothing to him since Damppling died.

Dora, left to her own devices, fooled them both, as she firmly believed she herself was being fooled. She was sweet and friendly. They dined together each night at Chapin's, although lunch had been struck off the menu.

She thought that she cared no longer. Turco's simile of the gumless postage stamp still appealed to her, but in a different way.

"You can't stick if you've nothing to stick to," was her comment on it.

Her imagination, however, did not warm

THE BLUE AURA

in the least to what she was about to do. She did not want to run away with Harland. She did not want to go to Spain or anywhere else with him. The telegram was sent in sheer defiance. It was the only possible thing to do by way of getting even with Ted.

On Thursday night, after supper, Turco said complacently:

"Well, we open at the Corinthian on Monday. Madame Bernhardt's in the bill, and Tina Wherry. We're placed equal to Wherry. Not so bad."

Tyson laughed like a boy.

"I should say not! We've been going great lately."

"Next season an advance of thirty per cent., and money to burn," said Turco. "Did I show you those contracts?"

Dora, huddled on the hassock before the fire, let them ramble on. What had it to do with her—next season—even next Monday at the Corinthian?

"You told me," said Ted. "Of course it's all you, old man. I know that right enough."

"It's all of us—Dora, too. They love her. Can I act by myself?" Turco was wonder-

THE BLUE AURA

fully generous. He was also businesslike. "Eleven-thirty to-morrow morning—work all day Saturday—a limber up on Monday morning. They haven't called a rehearsal. They know our stuff. Dora, did you hear?"

"I heard. What would happen if one of us was taken ill—couldn't go on or something?"

"Depends which one," Ted said tranquilly.

"Me—for instance?"

"Oh, well, you wouldn't make a vital difference."

"I don't know about that," said Turco, wagging his head. "Dora's got her place with us. We've had good luck ever since she joined on."

Dora's head dropped on her folded arms. She was not going to cry, but she felt terribly depressed.

Life would be a curious thing from now on. It could be adventure of the wildest sort, and adventure was something she had always craved; but now she didn't care very much for it.

Molly Brian's popping up at this time and snatching Ted away from her had taught her something she had never known before

THE BLUE AURA

about love, but she was not the sort to share her man's affections with another woman. That was entirely out of the question.

"I wish it was to-morrow night," said Ted, winking at Turco.

Dora looked at him vaguely, and then at Turco, who said: "S-sh!" and went into a fit of silent laughter.

"Because to-morrow I'm going to have the night of my life," said Ted.

"You're a good one for keeping secrets," Turco rebuked him.

"What are you going to do?" Dora asked. "Or mustn't I ask?"

She didn't care, really. To-morrow night she would be far away. Perhaps Ted wouldn't be enjoying himself as much as he thought.

"You can ask, but if I was to tell you—o-oh, how the fur would fly!"

"Don't tease her," said Turco a little sharply.

She got up and left them. Let them chuckle and pretend and make a fuss over mysteries, if they liked. Her life was going off with a bang to-morrow. Ted could have his Molly Brian, since he preferred her.

THE BLUE AURA

In the morning Ted and Turco left for the studio, as they called it, directly after breakfast. Dora was to join them at eleven-thirty.

She waited until they were out of the house, and then hurriedly packed a couple of bags with clothing that she had already prepared. It did not take her ten minutes. Then she dragged the bags downstairs herself, and hailed a taxicab. She was off, with a sob in her throat and a great misery in her heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT the time she was leaving, Turco conceived a weird feeling of uneasiness. He suddenly remembered something both lacking and added in Dora's casual bidding them good-by that morning. And as suddenly he recalled the absurd confession she had made to him a week before.

Lord Anthony Harland had invited her to elope with him on this Friday morning. Dora's behavior of late had been unnaturally calm. She had avoided quarrels when more than one opportunity was offered, and there had been alternate gleams of sadness and malice in her eyes.

"Bless my soul!" Turco cried vehemently.

His partner, busy getting into "gym" kit, inquired what was the matter.

"I've forgotten something," Turco replied, picking up his coat and starting for the stairs on a run. He ran all the way to New Compton Street, pulling on his coat as he went, and attracting considerable attention.

THE BLUE AURA

The rooms were empty. Dora was not there, but signs were not lacking of her hasty flight. On the mantelshelf in the sitting-room he found a note she had left for Ted, and he opened it with no compunctions whatever.

Dear Ted:

You don't care for me any more, so I am going away. You needn't look for me. I hope you will be happy with Molly, which I can never be.

DORA.

Once more Turco was in the street. It lacked twenty minutes to eleven, and with luck he could get to Charing Cross in five.

A comical figure he looked, racing along, waving his long arms at cabs, trying to lay hold on them, irrespective of the fact that the flags were down. A policeman who thought he was mad detained him for a minute of his valuable time, and a crowd collected.

But finally an empty cab came crawling along, and Turco fought his way to it.

"Charing Cross station—as quick as you can," he cried.

Some of the crowd, scenting excitement,

THE BLUE AURA

tried to follow on foot, and two little boys followed on the back springs of the cab itself, to their great peril, since the driver delightedly took Turco at his word.

Turco was not quite sure how he was going to stop Dora's running away; but he meant to stop her, if he had to choke the breath of life out of Lord Anthony Harland. Those long fingers of his were like steel. He had the strength and agility of a gorilla. Turco's aura was anything but blue at that moment. A red mist actually swam before his eyes. It blurred his vision.

The station was crowded. He looked about, but saw no signs of Dora. Very likely she was already on the express. At the barrier he had some trouble to pass the ticket collector, but finally got by on the plea that he had an urgent message to deliver to one of the passengers.

It was then a matter of finding her. He looked in every carriage, from Pullmans to third-class. Not a sign—nor of Harland, either.

Seven minutes, now. Obviously they hadn't boarded the train yet. Turco took up his position at the barrier, where he could watch

THE BLUE AURA

everybody coming in. The hands of the big clock crept on.

Perhaps Dora had not told the truth about the station. It might have been Victoria. Perhaps it was the afternoon train. Perhaps—but poor Turco did not know what to think. He stood there, trembling and sick at heart, his queer face dripping with perspiration, his monkey's eyes searching the crowd pathetically.

It was two minutes now, and he became aware of a man on the other side of the barrier who was watching him stealthily. He was a quiet individual of middle age, bearing the unmistakable stamp of the "gentleman's gentleman."

Turco had seen him before. Where? In a flash he knew. The man was Lord Anthony's valet. He had called once to bring a bag with his master's sweater and boxing gloves. Between whiles, as he watched Turco, his gaze roamed the station, as if he, too, was looking for someone, but less anxiously.

Turco slipped through just before the gates were closed. He spoke to Dodge in a gasping, cracked voice:

THE BLUE AURA

"You're Lord Anthony Harland's man, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mr. La Turque. I see you remember me. You weren't looking for his lordship by any chance, were you?"

"Just who I was looking for," Turco said.

"Oh, his lordship's postponed his journey. I'm on the watch for a—ahem—a lady who was to have traveled over with him; but she hasn't appeared."

Turco moistened his dry lips.

"Mrs. Tyson?"

"Then you know her, Mr. La Turque?"

"I—I know her. She's my pal's wife."

Dodge shifted uneasily, and strove to make the situation natural.

"Well, it seems she hasn't arrived. No doubt altered her plans at the last moment, same as his lordship. Pleased to have met you again, Mr. La Turque."

He was turning away, but Turco caught at him.

"Wait—are you sure? I—I got to know 'bout this, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Dodge is my name."

"Mr. Dodge. I don't know what you think of his lordship—but, as man to man, I ask

THE BLUE AURA

you to tell me the truth. You say he's changed his plans. What were you to tell Mrs. Tyson? Was she meeting him somewhere else?"

The valet smiled faintly.

"Oh, no. I was to tell her simply that his lordship was not going abroad. As a matter of fact—h'mm—I happen to know he's gone down into the country to be near a lady whose husband has just died—a lady for whom his lordship feels a great deal of sympathy. He only got word last night about her husband's death, so naturally his plans were changed at the last moment."

The cold cynicism of Harland's behavior as affecting Dora swept over Turco without touching him.

He was almost happy because he knew—and could prove it, if need be—that at the last moment she, too, had changed her plans. She had left home, but she had not gone to Charing Cross station. She was not with Harland.

Turco went back to New Compton Street, and she was not there, either. Then he hurried around to the studio, and found Ted waiting for him in a fever of annoyance.

THE BLUE AURA

"You know what I have to do to-day. Here it is an hour gone—Dora not showed up, either," he said crossly.

"She hasn't been here?"

"No. It'll be lunch-time before long. Did you go round to Petrosini's?"

"Yes. I—yes, I—was there."

"Did you see Dora?"

"No; she'd gone out."

Turco fingered the note in his pocket. How was he to tell his young partner what had happened? And to-day was to have been such an exciting and happy one for them all, Dora included, although she knew nothing of their silly secret. They ought to have told her.

"You know, Ted, you were a darn fool to've brought Molly into your scheme, even though she was so friendly and willing," Turco blurted out, by way of preparing his partner for what was coming.

"Oh, rot! I had to get a woman's help, didn't I?"

"I think we ought to've got Dora's."

"But it was to be a surprise for her—like a Christmas tree!"

Turco scratched his head.

THE BLUE AURA

"You an' me, Ted, perhaps we don't know much about women. Now, Dumpling was different. She was a sort of spirit, anyway. She liked surprises; but I'm not so sure about Dora."

Ted was impressed by his friend's painful solemnity.

"Well, to-night it'll be all finished and she'll know."

"Not much good to-night. I found this on the mantelpiece when I went in. I sort of felt—queer."

He handed Tyson the note Dora had left behind.

Tyson read it, a pallor sweeping over his handsome face. Even his lips went white.

"Left me—hopes I'll be happy with Molly! Oh, my God, Turco! She thought all the time——"

"Yes; you see, that's what she thought," said Turco, gulping painfully. "How could she know, when you said you wouldn't take a flat, that you'd already gone and got one, hoping she might be happy in it? How could she know that you 'n' me was busy all this week fixing it up? I don't blame Dora. You

THE BLUE AURA

didn't even tell me that you'd brought Molly into the scheme."

"Bah! Molly! What's it matter about her? She's going to be married herself. She don't care anything for me now—no more than I do for her."

As yet it had not entered Ted's mind what a wicked intention had been in Dora's.

"Turco, we've got to find her," he said unsteadily.

"Sure, we've got to find her," Turco replied, as cheerfully as he could. "We open at the Corinthian on Monday. Dora knows that. Perhaps she'll be a sport and come back."

There was no question of practicing that morning. They had to find Dora, without the least notion in the world where to look for her.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT Harland might have had something to do with Dora's taking herself off so unceremoniously dawned on Ted slowly. But when the idea finally arrived it came to stay.

He remembered the scene with her shortly after Dumpling died, when she had told him of Dumpling's strange dream. In the dream it was Turco who had killed Harland. But why had Dumpling dreamed such a thing?

Tyson repeated this incident to Turco, and poor Turco looked guilty—he knew so much more about Dora's moods than her own husband did. He was also possessed of superior knowledge regarding at least one thing she had not done.

She had not gone to Charing Cross, although it might have been her intention to do that when she left the house.

Turco could not be faithful to his partner without betraying Dora. Well, then, he must be faithless.

THE BLUE AURA

"What makes you so sure she hasn't lost her head over that man?" Tyson demanded.

"Because I know," Turco said stubbornly. "There's nothing in it—there never was, really."

"You're shielding her. I can tell by your manner. Where does he live?"

Turco was forced to give up Harland's address, forced to drag along after Tyson to Eaton Place, where they found the little house shut up with a "To Let Furnished" sign posted over the area.

As night fell, Turco sheered Tyson off to the theater where Edith Trelawny was employed. Betty and Ivy were interrogated; but they merely exchanged glances and tittered. They had had nothing to do with Dora for a long time—ever since her fraud had been uncovered.

Edith came out into the corridor when she could spare a moment.

"Left you? Run away? With whom?" Dora's mother asked calmly. "No, I haven't seen her."

Tyson by this time looked the picture of wretchedness. Turco hung silently in the background, a grotesque, limp figure in his

THE BLUE AURA

baggy clothes, his eyes inexpressive, as if he was too weary to pay much attention to what was going on.

It seemed odd that Dora's own mother should assume that she had not eloped alone.

"Did she ever mention a man by the name of Harland—Lord Anthony Harland—to you?" Tyson asked.

Edith Trelawny jumped.

"Good gracious, no! Did Dora know him?"

"Ted's potty," said Turco.

Neither of them noticed what he said.

"She knew him, yes," Tyson replied.

"We had a row or two over him."

"Well, he's a good one!" Edith sniffed.

"What do you know about him?"

"I know where he is—and I don't think he'd look twice at Dora when somebody else I know crooked her finger at him. Unless I'm much mistaken——"

Turco asserted himself at this point, and got what she knew of the story out of her. Then she had to hurry back to her duties, and the two men wandered forlornly out into the night.

THE BLUE AURA

They went back to Mrs. Petrosini's. It was then about eight-thirty.

Tyson sat on the couch in the sitting-room. His handsome face was marked strangely, as if someone had drawn lines on it with a broad black pencil.

He was an humble soul. His tragedy, if spread broadcast, would make no stir in the world. His wife had left him. That was nothing; it happened to quite a number of men.

Turco patted his friend on the shoulder with a heavy effort at sympathy.

"Don't you worry; I'm 'most as fond of Dora as you are. Sometimes I think you wouldn't have married her but for me."

"How's that?" Tyson demanded sharply.

Indeed, how could it be? He knew nothing of the sovereign slipped into Dora's hand at a critical moment in her career of starvation. He didn't realize that her cheeky independence, banking on that surreptitious gift of Turco's, had made her seem more desirable than the freedom of bachelorhood.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter—only I'm fond of Dora, too, and I believe in her," said

THE BLUE AURA

Turco. "She's born to trouble—but that's what the Bible says about all of us. We have to work out of that—and Dora's working: I'll say that much for her."

"If you'll tell me where she is I won't deny you," Tyson replied.

"Better have something to eat," Turco suggested evasively.

He hadn't an idea where Dora was—he had only his faith, based on the fact that she hadn't even meant to run away with Harland. And Turco's faith was a sublime thing. Never had he really doubted Dora. He had only been frightened half out of his senses by an idea.

"Eat? Can you?"

"I ain't hungry," Turco replied.

His partner laughed.

"What makes you think I might be?"

"You ought to. I say, Ted—you know how we planned everything? Ordered supper—and everything?"

Tyson groaned and buried his face in his hands.

"It's waiting now. I told the woman eight o'clock. Champagne—sausage—ice-cream! In our home! What Dora likes. You 'n' me

THE BLUE AURA

working ourselves to the bone to get the place all ready for her—a surprise!”

“Yes, we ought to’ve told her,” Turco said gloomily. “The longer I live the surer I am women don’t like surprises—unless they do it themselves. But what I meant was this—you go around and wait, and leave me to find Dora.”

Poor little man! He hadn’t the least idea in the world how to make good his task. He had only his faith, and he wanted to be alone with it. He wanted to feel Dora’s presence somewhere in the great heart of London, unhampered by the material grief of her husband.

He could not explain, even to himself, that Dora was as dear to him, if not more so, than she was to Ted.

The love he had for her was not the love he had felt for Dumpling. Where Dumpling was concerned he had no regrets. Conscience could point to nothing left undone. With Dora there were a thousand things left undone. That was because she was difficult—irritating. But the fault was his. There had been more than a responsive spark in her.

THE BLUE AURA

He, Turco, had jeered and scolded at her. His conscience hurt him sorely!

"What makes you think you can find her?" Tyson asked.

"I just got an idea," Turco replied, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "Go on, my lad. If you think of anything, you can do it—but me, I can only think when I'm by myself."

"You want to get rid of me?"

"I wouldn't say that, said Turco—who meant it, nevertheless.

"I can go to the devil," Tyson observed.

He rose, lurching.

"If you do—you might be sorry. We open at the Corinthian on Monday. If you make a beast of yourself—I'm finished. Fair warning."

Tyson went out. He said nothing in response to the threat that had been hurled at him.

Turco prowled about the deserted rooms that had constituted Dora's home.

He moved aimlessly—but he was free. Nobody was here but himself. He moved without consciousness.

The opaque globes against which the gas-

THE BLUE AURA

lights spurted fitfully did not trouble him. Nor was he troubled by the shabby ugliness—the sagging chairs; the fading flowers tightly bunched in their cheap glazed vases; the trodden lodging-house carpet and hideous wall decorations.

His subconscious mind was intent on a clew—so that he could make good a tentative promise.

It was some time before he found it. Among the débris Dora had left in her top bureau drawer was Eileen Hogarth's address.

Eileen! He wondered that he had not thought of her before.

But, as it happened, Dora was not at Eileen's, nor had she been there. It took Turco about fifteen minutes to discover that.

His heart sank when once more he found himself in the street, and with no idea whatever. It was getting late, and he had not only the worry of Dora on his mind, but of Dora's husband.

He thought if he walked about a bit he might find her. The streets in the neighborhood had their full quota of young women pedestrians. Turco peered into their faces, pressed close to them, followed one here and

THE BLUE AURA

there whose figure bore some slight resemblance to Dora. He was like a lost dog vainly seeking its master.

He did not find her.

In his fatalistic consciousness he conceived the feeling that he should never see her again in this world.

If that was to be so, he wished that he could know that she was safe, as Dumpling was safe.

But, in spite of his conviction, he kept on searching up one street and down another, but sticking to the district with which they were all familiar. He could not imagine Dora as being anywhere else.

So the hours went on, and it was midnight.

CHAPTER X.

MEANWHILE, what of Dora?

She was safe enough, you may believe; and, while Turco was hunting for her so vainly, she was on the eve of the greatest moment of pure happiness she was ever to enjoy.

It came about in this way. Having started for the station in the morning, she decided not to go to Spain, after all. That was quite a logical decision for her.

She did not want to go. She had come to detest Harland. It suddenly dawned on her that it was foolish to take a revenge that would react so heavily on herself.

Moreover, lately a stealthy knowledge of love had crept into her veins. She knew that she loved her husband. She had learned that, for the first time, when the deserted wife rôle failed her and threatened to become fact instead of pure fiction.

Halfway to the station that morning her

THE BLUE AURA

sense of adventure was satiated and her desire for revenge weakened.

She still wanted to hurt Ted—but she did not want to make it impossible to go back to him sometime.

So, when the search for her began, she was having a nap in a bedroom of a cheap hotel in the Strand.

When Turco began his courageous hunt alone, she was sneaking back to New Compton Street, sick of herself and the day's isolation.

Mrs. Petrosini, much astonished, but keeping her own counsel, then directed Dora to a perfectly strange address.

"Your husband—he waits for you there," said Mrs. Petrosini. "I heard Mr. Turco tell him to go. Mr. Turco, he looks for you. I heard him say so."

Dora's flagging spirits flared up anew. What was Ted doing in that new block of handsome flats in Beaumont Street? Did Molly Brian live there. But no; Mrs. Petrosini said he was waiting there for her—Dora.

Curiosity gripped her. She would find out. So a cab whirled her around to Beaumont

THE BLUE AURA

Street. Vastly astonished she was to see Tyson's name on the board in the hall.

What had happened? What did it mean?

Aha! That was where his money had been going of late. That was why he had been so busy. Keeping another establishment!

But she didn't quite believe it, nevertheless. Perhaps a relative of his lived here. She was still far from guessing the truth.

She wore a draggled, woe-begone look as she pressed the electric bell. There were lights inside the empty-looking hall, and a smell of paint that crept out through the door.

And then the door opened, and there was Ted, with his face all lined and the look in his eyes which told that the end of patience had been reached. So far he had obeyed Turco; but if Dora had not come when she did, there is no knowing what he might not have done.

They gazed into each other's eyes for a few seconds, and then they melted into each other's arms. The explanation came afterward.

Dora broke down and sobbed when she realized what her husband's secret had been. Here it was before her eyes—the fresh, new home, clumsily arranged and garishly con-

THE BLUE AURA

trived, that he had conceived before she had expressed a definite wish for it.

He had meant it as a surprise, hoped to coax her to contentment by it.

There was a meal all spread in the bare, paint-smelling box of a dining-room, with just the things she liked. There was a fearful and wonderful bedroom, all done in violent pink. There was a drawing-room—but why describe the flat further? It was tasteless, perhaps, but with nothing that Dora did not feel competent to rectify with a turn of the wrist, and nothing at all of which she absolutely disapproved. She was even able to bear Molly Brian's small share in arranging it, so great and vast was her humiliation. Particularly was this so when she learned that Molly was to be married shortly.

Dora twirled on her toes.

"Oh, I *am* so happy! Do you love me, Ted?"

Tyson loved her, but he could not say how much, because that was impossible.

She wondered if she ought to tell him how wicked she had very nearly been. No—better wait and ask Turco's advice on that subject.

They were both famished, so they finally

THE BLUE AURA

sat down to the gala supper without Turco. He wouldn't mind.

"I wonder where the old chap can be?" said Tyson.

Dora laid down her fork, a little anxious look creeping into her face. They had been so happy that poor Turco was very nearly forgotten.

"You said he went out to look for me."

"Ah, but he can't be looking all this time," Tyson said comfortably.

It was quite easy not to be worried about Dora, now that she was here.

"Hadn't you better run around to Mrs. Petrosini's?"

"She'd tell him."

"I know—but just to be sure he's back. Perhaps he has come back and thought he'd leave us alone for this evening. It's just the sort of thing Turco would do."

"Yes, I know. It's probably what he has done," said Tyson.

"But I'd like to have him here. Poor old Turco! Ted, I—I feel that Turco has been a sort of good angel to me. You've no idea—well, I can't tell you exactly. Ever since the very first evening when you brought him to

THE BLUE AURA

Chapin's with us, Turco has been so kind to me. You wouldn't be jealous if I said I loved him?"

This was a sweet and melting Dora, a delicious morsel of womanhood, loving, yet still a wee bit coquettish.

"I'd be jealous of anybody," said Tyson.

They had finished their meal, and she was sitting on his knee.

"You dear!"

She put her arms around his neck and drew his handsome, boyish face near to hers.

It flashed across her that the blue aura, as described by Turco, must be a symbol of complete moral purification. And Turco had said she mustn't depend so much on other people, be influenced by them, whether for good or evil. She must have some character of her own.

Very well, then, she would wipe her slate clean. Confession was a horrible thing. Yet she confessed.

Perched on her husband's knee, with her hands clasped about his neck, she told him everything, and felt that the blue aura was within reaching distance.

To be quite truthful, Tyson did not accept

THE BLUE AURA

the confession of her intended elopement as becomingly as he should have done.

He reiterated his desire to murder Lord Anthony Harland. Once, he even attempted to struggle away from Dora's embrace and evict her from his knee.

But he loved her, and she made out a very good case for herself. When she wept and pointed out that she need never have told him at all, he capitulated completely.

After that they were happier than ever, and for a little while longer forgot Turco. It was Dora's splendid hour—the hour in which her fluid character took definite form and promised to become more or less solid.

Dora would not go to bed without knowing why Turco had held aloof from them in this strange fashion.

"I couldn't sleep," she said.

Tyson got into his overcoat reluctantly.

"Very well. What time is it? Great Scott! Midnight! Turco's all nicely tucked up by this time."

"Just so long as I know he is," said Dora.

So Ted was obliged to go around to Mrs. Petrosini's to make sure.

Alone in the splendid new flat, Dora wan-

THE BLUE AURA

dered from room to room in a sobered, very gentle mood. Turco would be so pleased to know what a good girl she was going to be forever.

She was a little uneasy about him. It was impossible to believe that he had gone to bed, even though he knew she was safe, without looking in to scold or praise her.

The doorbell rang. Quickly she ran to answer it. That was Turco, of course.

It wasn't.

She stared apprehensively at the big policeman who stood on her threshold.

"Are you Mrs. Tyson, madam?"

"Y-yes," Dora faltered.

The policeman cleared his throat. He was a good-natured, kindly fellow, and did not relish telling bad news, although it was a frequent necessity in his day's work.

"Is your husband at home, madam?"

Dora, frozen with fear, wondered what it could mean.

"No; he's just gone out a moment. Please tell me. What is it?"

"An accident, madam. A friend of yours, Mr. La Turque——"

"Turco!" screamed Dora.

THE BLUE AURA

“Yes, madam. Run over in the street by a motorcar. There was a lady just ahead that he thought he knew, according to witnesses. He called out to her and started across, not heeding, as you might say. We took him to Charing Cross Hospital, madam——”

“Is he badly hurt?” Dora asked. “I must go to him at once. I——”

“It’s no good your doing that, madam. He’s dead. He died before we got to the hospital.”

CHAPTER XI.

TURCO was dead.

Dora received the news with an electric shock that made every hair of her head prickle.

Turco was dead.

She knew well enough that he had died seeking her—that she was the woman he thought he was hurrying after, oblivious of the machine of death bearing down on him. Her mad freak of willfulness had cost him his life.

Why had he not known that she was safe—he who had known so many things without needing to be told?

The young policeman was watching her with a troubled expression. She stood straight against the gayly papered wall—a queer-looking girl, he thought, with her mop of short hair and fiercely bright eyes. He wondered if she was going to faint or do anything foolish.

But Dora had almost forgotten the police-

THE BLUE AURA

man was there. She had lost herself in thought. A divine message was ringing in her ears. A long time ago a Man infinitely more wonderful than poor Turco, yet the humblest who has ever trod this earth, had said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

Perhaps when Turco was wandering so blindly, looking for her, it was not merely her material body that he sought. Perhaps he knew that the shell of her was safe. Perhaps he had given his life, so that she could capture her soul.

"I'll just wait, if I may, until your husband gets back, madam," the young policeman said uneasily.

"Yes, certainly; come inside," Dora replied.

She felt that she could not ask any questions about Turco. It was enough that he was dead, and that he had died for her.

Tyson returned, and she sat by herself in the room where they had feasted, while the policeman and Tyson talked together in low tones in the hall.

Ted came in to her after a little while. He looked ghastly.



"NOW THAT HE WAS DEAD, NOW THAT HE HAD DIED FOR HER,
SHE OWED IT TO HIM TO BE GOOD FOREVER."

THE BLUE AURA

"I must go along to the hospital to identify the poor old chap," he said. "Shall you mind being alone?"

Dora shook her head. No; she didn't mind being alone.

When he had gone off with the policeman, she went into the little bedroom which would have been Turco's, and which he had furnished with his own things. It was a bare room—just the bed, a chair, and a wash-hand-stand, with a shelf over the stand holding a few of the cheap little presents he had sent Dumpling, cherished because they had been dear to her.

And over the bed, neatly fastened to the wall with thumb-tacks, was one of the curious water-color sketches Dumpling had been so fond of making, a radiant sunburst effect in blue and gold and mauve. Dumpling had labeled it: "A Heavenly Thought."

Dora stood looking at the sketch, her heart swelling with remorseful grief.

A heavenly thought!

She knew what would have made Turco happy, were he alive. But, had he lived, perhaps it would have been difficult for her to keep her high resolutions. Now that he was

THE BLUE AURA

dead, now that he had died for her, she owed it to him to be good forever.

With a sob she flung herself on her knees beside the little iron bed and made her promise to God in the name of the humble friend who had given his life for her.

If Turco knew, he must have been happy.

THE END

